

The **RED PRIOR'S LEGACY**



**FRIENDS
OF ACPL**

Alfred H. Bill

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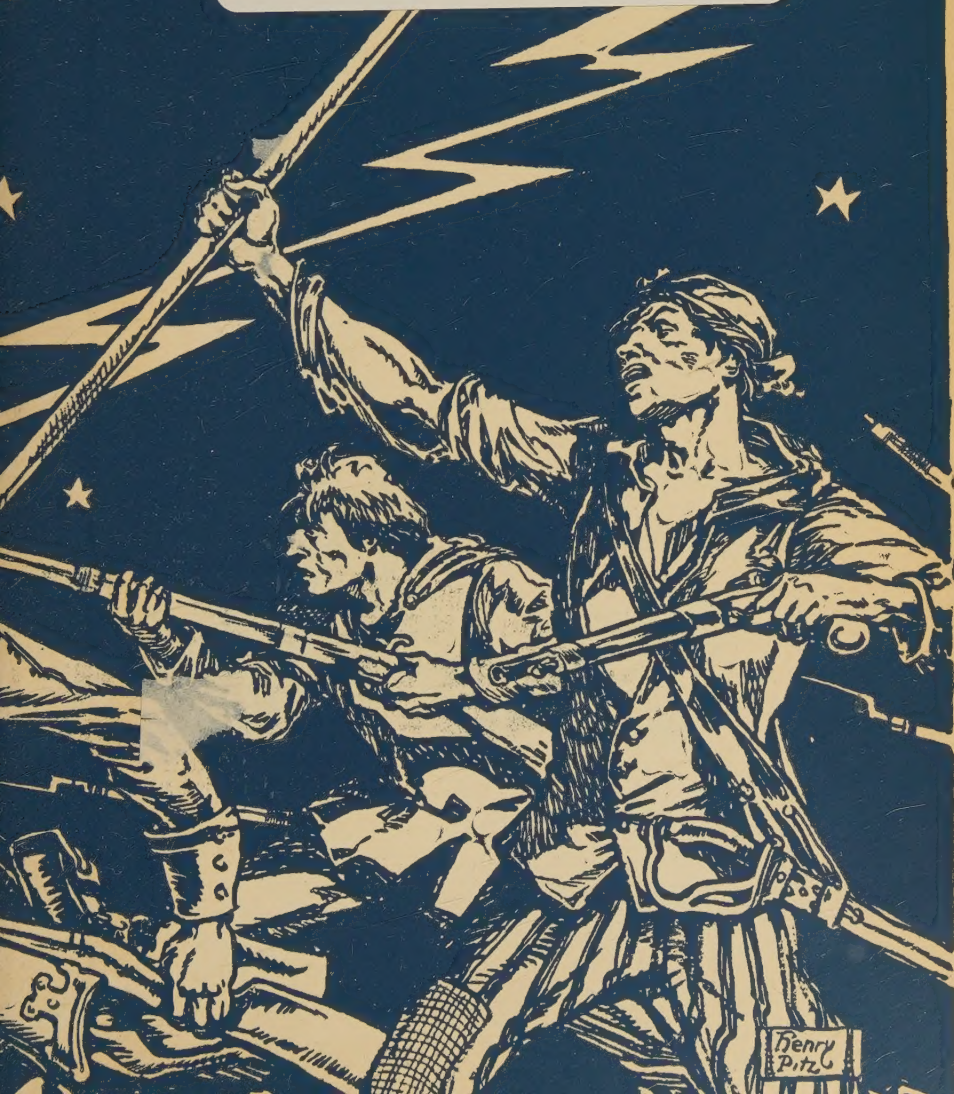
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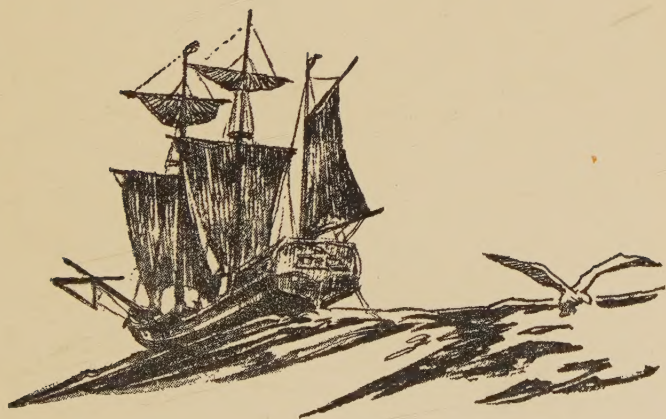
FRIENDS OF ACPL


The red prior's legacy



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The Red Prior's Legacy





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A SORRY PROCESSION SWAGGERED INTO VIEW

THE RED PRIOR'S LEGACY

*The Story of the Adventures of
an American Boy in the
French Revolution*

BY

ALFRED H. BILL

Author of "The Clutch of the Corsican"

ILLUSTRATED BY

HENRY C. PITZ

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

LONDON · NEW YORK · TORONTO

BILL
THE RED PRIOR'S LEGACY

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BY ALFRED H. BILL

First Edition June 1929
Reprinted June 1931
January 1935
November 1937
June 1941

ROBT. W. BAKER & SONS CO. LTD.
LIBRIS PUBLISHERS
COUNTY DOWN, IRELAND

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



To

My Godson

ARTHUR HENRY ROBERTSON

CO. SCHOOLS

C174147

*Remains
F. H. O.*

APR 17 1945





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The Red Prior's Legacy

CHAPTER I

A LETTER FROM FRANCE

THE mere outward appearance of it should have warned me of its evil intent — or so it seems as it lies before me now, these many years since it was written. There is a furtive look to its filthy wrapper greased with long hiding in some seaman's jacket, a squalor in the tangle of pack-thread that still dangles from the seal, something almost insulting in the impression of the ten-sous piece which had been used to fix the dirty wafer in its place. A low groom might have dispatched such a missive to a trollop of a servant girl from some foul estaminet, but never a great, true-hearted noble, writing to his only brother, let his need of giving the look of humble unimportance to his letter be what it might. But since it came from France, I knew that only my father's brother, the brilliant and powerful Marquis de Remberville, could have written it; and we stood in such need of help from somebody just then, my father and I, that I should have hailed

that letter joyously, had I known it to have been written in blood and dried with the sands of the Bottomless Pit.

It was the third day of the second week of my search for work, and apparently nobody in the whole city of New York needed a clerk who spoke and wrote French and understood the usages of the French trade. Everywhere I was met with the same story as that which had accompanied my dismissal by my former employers: business generally was bad and political conditions in France so uncertain that merchants trading thither dared do no more than mark time for the present.

"Call upon us when things quiet down over there, my lad," I was told as the door of one counting-house after another closed behind me. They spoke civilly, even kindly, for, young as I was, I had worked through the previous winter as only a boy will when his livelihood and his father's very life depend upon his efforts and, though I say it who shouldn't perhaps, I had earned a reputation for industry and exactitude among those engaged in the foreign trade.

But I could not wait for a job until the French nation should decide what form of government suited them best. At the end of the second week, having tried all the probable places of employment in vain, I set out doggedly to go from door to door, from shop to shop, up Water Street and down Queen, saving for the last



those places of business which had begun to crowd up from the foot of Wall Street and elbow the fine houses at its upper end. I forced my way into private offices, scaled long flights to lawyers' chambers, got myself roared at, sneered at, shown the door with a frigid

politeness that hurt worst of all since I could not then console myself with the sense of superiority that served against roughness and insolence. Twice I believe I should have been thrown out bodily if a second look at my six feet of bone and muscle had not convinced the porter that the breakage of furniture which would probably ensue was too high a price to pay for the pleasure of laying hands upon me.

After two days of this, nothing but the thought of my father drove me on. Had I been alone, I would have given up and enlisted in the forces which were being recruited just then to march against the Ohio Indians. Pale and weak from his winter of illness, and now recovering only very slowly on the "half-rations," as he gaily called them, to which our shrinking stock of money had reduced us, I would leave him each day in his wicker chair beside the open window, the spring sunshine warming the shawl that covered his knees, his Virgil and Horace beside him and "*Bonne fortune, mon fils,*" on his lips. That Wednesday morning he called me back.

"Do but listen to the beginning of the Third Ode," he said, speaking in French as he always did when we were alone together. "*Iustum et tenacem propositi virum* — Ah, but it will mean more to you in English doubtless. Addison has translated it finely." And he quoted:

*"The man resolved and steady to his trust,
Inflexible to all and obstinately just,
May the rude rabble's insolence despise,
Their senseless clamors and tumultuous cries."*

That was so like my father, to give me those words of counsel and encouragement instead of an outspoken sympathy which might have unmanned me for my task. And high as was the mark of courage set by those couplets, I knew that it was no higher than he himself had achieved. Resolved, steady, inflexible, and just he had been, let it cost him what it might. And although it was a courtly rabble, it was a rabble none the less whose insolence he had despised when he married, not the noble heiress chosen for him from among the maids of honor of Queen Marie Antoinette, but the lovely young American girl, daughter of a New York merchant whose business kept him in Paris the winter of 1772. His father had been furious, his elder brother contemptuous and smiling, but his answer to a threat of an order from the King, sending him to Senegal on a mission, had been a marriage performed by the chaplain of the British embassy and a dash over the Netherlands border with his bride to catch an American vessel sailing from Antwerp.

My mother had told me of the complete indifference with which he received news of the royal decree that deprived him of his privileges as a French noble and

his right of inheritance to the ancestral titles and estates of the Mirecourts. He had made no effort to secure his reinstatement in his birthright, when the French alliance with the struggling Thirteen Colonies and his own honorable record on the staff of General Knox as engineer officer throughout the war would probably have made such an attempt successful. With the same calm courage he had seen the fortune which he had built up in the past eight years of peace, and my mother's fortune as well, swept away the previous summer in one of those premature ventures in western lands which brought even such sagacious men as Robert Morris to ruin in the 1790's. His bodily health had broken under the blow, sapped as it was by the strain of my mother's lingering illness and death. But he had moved into the small low rooms three flights up above the roaring cobblestone pavements of Water Street with a cheerful equanimity so strong that he did not fear to express now and again his regret for the simple elegance of the big Georgian country house over on Long Island where we could no longer afford to live.

The encouragement of his quotation and of his example, which the quotation evoked, had died away by the middle of the morning, however. It was no more than the dull determination of despair that drove me up the long flights leading to Counselor Mygatt's cham-

bers. I didn't know they were his. I climbed to the top of the building simply because I was resolved to let no chance go untried, and I had become too deadened by unvarying refusals even to read his name on the door. Had I done so, I do not believe I would have gone in, for, though I had never seen his face, I knew only too much of the man with whom I should have to deal.

Since his clerk was gone out on some errand, his own low, grating voice bade me enter. He kept his close-set eyes, prominent and cold like gooseberries, fixed on my face while for the twentieth time that day I plunged into the explanation of my purpose in calling.

"So ye claim to be able to read and write the French tongue, do ye?" he cut me short. "Then let me tell ye, 'tis very strange ye're reduced to seeking work from door to door unless ye've earned a record for dishonesty in your last place."

"Not when you consider the present state of the French trade, sir," I objected, schooling my voice and manner to respectfulness, though my frayed nerves smarted at his sneering tone. "What with the King of France practically a prisoner in his own palace, her Assembly voting heavy duties on American goods, the king's brothers and many of the greatest nobles moving heaven and earth to bring Austria and Prussia to declare war upon her —"

His thin lips broke from the contemptuous smile with which he had listened to my eager recital, and a wave of his yellow hand silenced my attempt to name my former employers as a reference for my honesty.

"If ye're so good at the French, perhaps ye'll find me the faults in that." And plunging among the dusty litter of papers and documents on his desk, he thrust at me a sheet so lately written that grains of the sand with which it had been dried skittered between my fingers.

"But this is one tissue of faults!" I exclaimed, glancing through it.

"Oh, it is, is it?" he sneered. "Perhaps ye failed to observe that it is signed by my own name and written in the same hand. Ye're not aware perhaps that in the late war I was fiscal agent for the French Quartermaster General under Count Rochambeau himself and am thus not totally ignorant of the French tongue."

"Though a born Frenchman had written this, it is nevertheless one mass of blunders," I retorted with the satisfaction one feels, when angry, at the chance to be truthful and thoroughly disagreeable at the same time. After the unvarying sameness of the rebuffs which I had encountered that morning this squabble was a delight.

He eyed me narrowly.

"What is that letter about?"

“About?” I echoed. “It’s about some dealings in the French funds. But whether you wish to buy or sell, no Frenchman would know by the time he got to the end of it. I know that you wish to buy, because I know our English idiom, but by the time you have tried to state your doubts and conditions by setting them over bodily into French —”

He stopped me by snatching the letter out of my hand, his face red with anger and mortification. His yellow fingernail shook as he dug it into the first line.

“Isn’t that clear?” he snarled. “If ye know anything, ye know that it is.”

“Why show it to me at all then?” I retorted.

At that he sprang out of his chair so furiously that I wondered whether, old and wizened though he was, he did not mean to fling himself upon me. Instead he skipped on his slim shanks across the room to his clerk’s table and threw two letters on its green baize surface.

“Since ye know so much, write me out a translation of those in English,” he challenged. “Then, if ye do that to my satisfaction, ye may write me what ye consider a proper version of mine for my signature.” And skipping back to his desk, he flounced down into his chair and buried himself in a great blue-backed document of many crackling pages.

Rather meanly amused at his huff, I sat down and drew a sheet of paper before me, dipped my pen — and

sat staring at one of the letters. "Eli Mygatt, Counselor-at-law," I read, and half rose from my stool. I had seen the name in the signature, of course, but only now did it have its meaning for me. Eli Mygatt was responsible for the extremity of my poverty. But for his magnifying certain small flaws in my father's title to them our farms and woodlands on Long Island could have been sold the previous summer for enough to pay the mortgages on them and enough more for us to live comfortably on the proceeds. But he had not stopped with that, which might have been excused as the over-conscientiousness of a legal specialist. Having ruined all chances of a quick sale, he had bought the mortgages himself. Now he had only to wait until my father's failure to pay the interest — a thing of which he could be quite certain — and all those many hundred acres would fall into his hands for less than half their value and with a title made good by virtue of foreclosure.

I half rose from my stool, I say, at this discovery. But I forced myself to sit down again. My indignation, and contemptuously stalking out of his office — I could do no more than that — would have no sting for such a creature, while the chance of earning a few of his shillings was more than I could afford to give up for the satisfaction of doing so. I crammed down my pride and went to work. It was a good two hours' task, what with his suspicious comparison of my translations with the

originals, and the clocks were striking the hour of noon when I laid a fair copy of his letter before him.

"Well enough, well enough, considering your youth and inexperience," he admitted grudgingly as he scratched his name at the bottom of the sheet. "I have nothing for ye to do in a regular way, of course. But if ye'll drop in from time to time, ye may find it worth your while. Good morning to ye."

Even then I did not grasp his intent. I had immediately given up all thought of steady employment by him, of course, but that he meant to take my work without paying for it did not cross my mind. I thought he must have forgotten the matter of payment for the moment.

"Good morning, sir," I replied, and added to remind him, "Would it be more convenient if I called for my pay this afternoon?"

"Your pay?" he exclaimed, his gooseberry eyes rolling up in simulated astonishment until only their muddy whites remained visible.

"Certainly," I answered. "It will be three shillings, if you please. A shilling a letter is what we always get for outside work."

"Outside work, my lad?" he laughed harshly.

"Piece work, if you prefer," I returned, keeping my hot temper down with all my might. "I've done a good deal of it of evenings the past winter, and that is

the regular price, as anybody who knows will tell you."

"But this was nothing of that kind," he scoffed. "This was a mere trial. It would be strange if one were kind enough to give a lad a trial and then had to pay him for his time. No, no." And he tried for a smile of good-humored indulgence, at which he failed miserably.

"But you wished those letters translated?"

"Merely to test your powers."

"You signed the new one. You mean to send it."

"How do ye know what I mean to do, sirrah?" he yelped at me. "Out of my room, young insolent, before I call and have ye pitched downstairs."

"Very well then," said I, realizing with joy that my brain had gone clear and cold as ice, as it always does when my anger reaches a certain pitch. I caught up the sheets I had written from where they lay before him on the desk. "Since you have no further use for these they will serve to show others what I can do."

His face turned a sickly green at that. It took me an instant to realize how much better I had played my game than I had intended. Counselor Mygatt, the trustee of estates, the conservative man of business for a score of the solidest families in New York, could not afford to have evidence of his speculation in anything so mercurial as the French funds shown about town. He had blundered egregiously in even letting me see

them. I had turned toward the door before he could pull himself together.

"N-not so fast. N-not so fast, young man," he stutted. "Those letters are mine."

"When you have paid for them. I wrote them."

I put on my hat.

"With my ink, on my paper, with my pen, in my room," he barked shrilly. "Have a care, sirrah! Leave this room with those letters on ye and a constable shall arrest ye at the bottom of the stairs on a charge of petit larceny. There is always one at the corner. He can hear me call from the window," he threatened, as I turned toward the door.

"I'm sure he can if I help you. Shall we shout together?" And linking my arm in his, I began to draw him toward the dirty sashes that looked as if they had not been opened since the last September. "My word is as good as yours before a magistrate, don't forget," I added cheerfully.

"Is it?" he sneered, but he jerked his arm free and stood still. "A wretched discharged clerk against a counselor-at-law — the magistrate will know how to discriminate, believe me."

"Yes," I agreed, "I think he will. Come, since you seem to prefer the door." I made a step before which he recoiled, leaving on its peg the hat to which his hand had been lifted. But I think it was less the fear of

bodily violence than the thought of the papers in my breast pocket that moved him. Their contents could not fail of a proper airing if either of us carried a complaint to court.

"Who are ye? What is your name?" he snarled.

"Henry de Mirecourt, very much at your service, sir," I told him with an ironical bow.

"Not Mirecourt of Flatbush?"

"Precisely, sir. Colonel de Mirecourt of Chestnut Manor is my father."

He was all affability at once. Why hadn't I said so at starting? Had he known that —

"Yes," I interrupted pleasantly. "You naturally thought it was only a matter of bamboozling a poor friendless lad out of a few honestly earned shillings. Now that you know that you have to deal with —"

"But naturally," he broke in smoothly, "I am satisfied that French letters written by Colonel de Mirecourt's son are above criticism. We who have but a rough and ready use of the tongue have little reason to trust our own judgment in the matter, as you have seen." He was counting out the shillings from a greasy purse, already had three before him on the desk and fingered a fourth and fifth uncertainly while he looked up at me with the palpable counterfeit of an arch smile in his cold eyes. "Three, ye said, did ye not? It might well be worth more, such French as yours — and a

confidential matter, quite confidential, ye understand? ”

“Two shillings will not buy my silence, sir,” I laughed, half in triumph, half in wonder that so astute a person should have blundered so grossly as to have placed himself in my power. Only the experience of years has taught me that men like him are continually being betrayed by their love of petty gains.

“’Tis a question of adequate remuneration for your excellent work,” he rebuked me primly. “Shall we say fifteen shillings? Ye doubtless write French like a doctor of the Sorbonne. And a boy brought up as ye have been will be able to understand that a confidential matter is in its nature — er — confidential.”

“We will say the three shillings I asked for in the beginning,” I returned drily. “As you just reminded me, nothing but pay for my work is involved in the business.” I scooped up the coins from the desk, tossed the letters down in front of him, and strode out, my hat on my head at a jaunty angle, leaving him to such fears of what I might do with my knowledge of his speculations as his own mean mind might suggest.

Thus it came about that half an hour later he was running after me with that sinister letter from France in his hand, and on his tongue the obsequious expression of his pleasure that he was able to be of any slight service to my father and me.



CHAPTER II

THE BLOOD OF ANTIOCH

MY SENSE of triumph and my angry amusement carried me down the stairs and out into the street before I realized that, richer by a paltry three shillings, I had given for them all that remained of the morning. I was still out of a job. My father would be waiting for me, counting on my company at his *déjeuner*, for in meal hours he stuck as closely as possible to the customs of his native land. I turned down the hill, intending to follow the waterfront as the quickest way to our lodgings. But my legs moved more and more slowly as I went along. The thought that I was once again bringing home a tale of disappointment and failure seemed to paralyze their action. Finally, as if of their own accord, they turned me off upon a dock and beside one of the great posts provided for mooring vessels came to a halt. Seated upon this, my chin sunk in my hands, my elbows on my knees, I stared gloomily out upon the scene before me.

I should have found it a stirring sight in any other mood. The throng of masts along the shore reared a beguiling labyrinth of spars and cordage into the bright



blue sky. The gay flags of every maritime nation of Europe fluttered at the gaff of the three or four score of vessels that rode, head to the flashing tide, from Governor's Island to Corlear's Hook. The Brooklyn shore

rose in slopes tender with the greenery of May. From the three checkerwise tiers of gun-ports of a British seventy-four shrilled the pipes of the boatswains, and her captain's barge sped shoreward to the cadenced glint of oar-blades under the blowing ensign at the stern. The French packet had hauled out into the stream. She would sail for L'Orient that afternoon and now lay to one anchor, waiting the flood tide, her Blue Peter whipping in the breeze. But my glance passed over all this, straining in a useless effort to glimpse certain white chimney-tops far beyond the farthest visible crest of the Long Island hills, chimney-tops that meant home to me, and memories of my mother moving gaily through gracious rooms, of the fat pony of my childhood, of the mettlesome English gelding — sold now these months ago — my father's present on my fourteenth birthday — memories, in short, of all the happy life which had been mine and which had seemed sure always to be mine this time last year.

The intent gaze of a pair of close-set, cold, gooseberry eyes aroused me from this unmanly reverie, and I had but a moment to rally myself to alertness when the grating voice of Counselor Mygatt hailed me. He waved a letter at me — *the* letter as it proved. As if by some premonition of what it was to bring me of bad and good, my heart leaped at sight of it. It was directed in care of the bank, and Counselor Mygatt, chancing to

stop there and observing that it had not come by the ordinary post-bag from France, had judged it important and begged for himself the pleasure of delivering it to Colonel de Mirecourt in person, he explained.

I thanked him and held out my hand for it with such eagerness as you may guess that a glance at its queer appearance inspired in me. But he would not hear of relinquishing his errand. He had long desired an excuse for waiting on my father, it appeared. He was but one of the many who deplored the retirement to which Colonel de Mirecourt had condemned himself since his reverses of fortune. The universal esteem in which such a man was held was in no way dependent upon his material possessions or the lack of them, as Colonel de Mirecourt must have recognized, had his modesty not equalled his other excellent parts.

I replied that my father's friends were aware that ill health, and not any cheap sensitiveness about his losses, accounted for his seclusion. I stressed the word, friends, and enjoyed an inward grin at the disorder into which the veiled retort threw the fawning creature. He stammered something about the difficulty of keeping in touch with even valued acquaintances in this busy world, and launched out afresh upon a flood of fulsome flattery, while I listened with a scorn which I did not try very hard to keep from showing on my face. How frightened he must be by my knowledge of his

speculations thus to seek to curry favor with me, thought I. And I held rather a high opinion of myself, I fear, as I considered that I could not stoop to prey upon his terrors. They might have been good for a summer's employment at excellent wages, it seemed, for there was no limit to his protestations. Meanwhile I made not the least attempt to moderate my pace to the short skipping of his meager shanks, and he arrived quite breathless at the top of the three long flights that ended outside the door of our rooms.

Never have I seen a contrast between two men more striking than when I ushered him into my father's presence. Never would you have guessed that my father was receiving a call from the man who by due process of law was in a position not only to strip him of all he possessed but perhaps even of his liberty as well — for the days of the debtor's prison were not yet over. He greeted his visitor with measured civility, but he did not rise from behind the covered dishes of the luncheon tray that stood on the table before him, and he made no excuse for not rising. Yet, as from the one man to the other, there appeared to be nothing of discourtesy in his not doing so. My father, with his hair drawn smoothly back from his high forehead and tied with a black ribbon at the nape of his neck, with his lace cravat, black coat, and silver buckled shoes, was a nobleman in every line of him. The old man whose ink-

stained fingers brushed at a smear of snuff on his coat lapel while he writhed and postured before him might have been his steward caught in some double-dealing with his master's money.

My father cut short his flow of compliments with brief thanks and held out his hand for the letter, which Counselor Mygatt handed over with an obsequious bow. But still the man did not go. He stood as if waiting for my father to read it to him or at least tell him any news it might contain. And suddenly it occurred to me that this was exactly what he was doing, that it was the hope of learning the very latest news from France quite as much as any fear of my revealing what I had discovered about him which had caused him to trouble himself about the letter at all. Such news, written by a great French noble and sent from France at least a fortnight after the regular packet, could not fail to be of the greatest value to a sober man of business who was about to commit himself to the treacherous chances of speculation in the French funds in the late spring of 1792. I had not long to wait before my guess was confirmed. My father had no more than put the letter in his pocket and laid a tentative finger on his fork when Counselor Mygatt was off again.

He had given himself no trouble. It was a pleasure to be of service to Colonel de Mirecourt. He had, moreover, long been desirous of an opportunity to disabuse

Colonel de Mirecourt's mind of certain misconceptions which he feared that the Colonel quite naturally — oh, quite naturally — might entertain. His purchase of the mortgages on our lands had been actuated really by a desire to keep them out of the clutches of some person who would avail himself of the first opportunity to seize them. He himself was so far from desiring to press any advantage that he stood ready to take a second mortgage for a thousand pounds, should my father desire to execute one.

“Let me hear the rest of your proposal, if you please,” said my father coldly, “for I am sure that this is not the whole of it.”

But it was not Counselor Mygatt's way to come out with the whole of anything at once. He began by asking whether my father had appreciated the business opportunities which his connection with the French Court through the Marquis de Remberville laid open to him. In short his proposal was that he and my father should form a kind of partnership, my uncle's letters furnishing advance information of the most reliable nature for their trading, and the lawyer supplying my father with his share of the necessary capital by making additional loans on our land. He finished out of breath, his loose mouth open with avidity.

“I am to trade on the misfortunes of my distracted native land, am I?” my father asked haughtily.

“Put it rather, sir, that we are both to grow rich as she emerges triumphantly from her distractions,” the lawyer insinuated. “Who knows, sir? That letter in your pocket may tell of a constitutional king backed by an enthusiastic country which has been made of one mind by the threat of foreign war. The funds rise. The war-cloud vanishes before the front of a reunited nation. The funds rise again! With two thousand pounds —”

“You said a thousand just now,” my father interrupted drily.

“Did I? I meant two, sir. A *lapsus linguæ*, I assure ye. Two thousand was the sum in my mind. Let us say two thousand and —”

“We will say five hundred,” my father cut him short. “Five hundred on a second mortgage at the same rate as before. I will have nothing to do with your wretched speculation, but I will furnish you with all the political news which this one letter contains — No. That is my final word on the subject,” he added as the other began to object.

“I am to see the letter, of course,” Counselor Mygatt attempted to stipulate.

“Pardon me, you are not. I will have a digest of what concerns your purpose ready for you tomorrow morning, when you will bring the papers here for my signature, with the money, at a quarter before noon

precisely. No—no comment, I beg.” My father’s lifted hand stilled the babble of protest on the lawyer’s lips. “All this is if you care to do it at all, of course. Should you decide against it, you need not trouble to inform me. I shall understand as much from your non-appearance. Good morning.”

Evidently unwilling to accept this summary disposal of the matter, Counselor Mygatt continued to stand for a moment on the same spot which he had occupied throughout the interview, but my father’s hand had followed his glance to the nearest of the covered dishes. So he contented himself with saying, as he turned toward the door:

“I hope ye will understand, sir, that in these financial matters I am acting only as agent for certain wealthy clients.”

My father glanced up at him sharply.

“Eh? Ah, indeed? Well, doubtless I should understand something about it, if I gave it any attention, sir. Henri, the door for the counselor, if you please.”

He signed for me to remain, holding it open until the lawyer’s frowsy wig and dusty hat had disappeared down the second flight. As I closed it he burst into a low chuckle.

“*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. What a wealth of worldly wisdom the ancients hold for us! As for me, I am distrustful of lawyers especially when they grow

generous. What is he really driving at, do you suppose? ”

“Just what he says, for once,” I answered, “except that bit about his acting for some client. He hadn’t thought up that lie when he was talking to me.” And I told him my experience in the lawyer’s chambers. My father laughed again when I ended.

“You did well, Henri. You handled him perfectly, I should say. But it is a good thing you two came in together. Had you been but a minute before him, he would have suspected me of trying to blackmail him just now. Doubtless it was the fear that I might that caused him to leave so quietly. That is the curse such men carry about with them: they believe all others to be as great rascals as they are themselves.”

Meanwhile my father had begun to eat with greater enjoyment than I had seen him show for a long time. I tried to imitate him, but my hands were continually leaving my knife and fork upon my plate, while my eyes followed the direction of my thoughts toward the breast pocket of my father’s coat, within which lay that letter. He took it out at last, having carefully folded his napkin and laid it beside his plate. Then I must bring him the scissors from his toilet table to cut the coarse thread that bound it. And after that I had to assume as best I could the attitude of detachment proper to a well-brought-up French boy when the affairs of his

elders are in question while he is present. In this I succeeded so ill that I missed no change of the many that passed over my father's fine features before he reached the end of the two closely written sheets. He had been reared in a school that frowned upon the betrayal of all strong emotion. By its teachings a gentleman must receive the news of his utter ruin or run his mortal enemy through the body without losing for a moment his air of complete urbanity. But the penciled eyebrows and mobile lips told me when sharp annoyance succeeded to a mild curiosity and when anxious indecision drove the latter before it.

He turned back to the beginning and read the whole through for the second time, but as he did so, he took from between the sheets a long blue slip of stamped paper and laid it face up on the table. I could not keep from reading it. It was a draft to his order on the London banking house of Baring for two hundred pounds. I looked up in my pleasure at the sight of anything so welcome to us and found his eyes resting upon me with sadness and perplexity lurking behind their sympathetic smile.

"How should you like to go to France, Henri?" he asked. "Your uncle desires to see you. Childless and a widower these many years, he has some thought of making you his heir, should you seem worthy of the

honor and likely to be equal to the responsibilities of such a position."

Should I like to go to France? Does any healthy and reasonably intelligent lad of the age I was then imagine that I could make more than one answer to that question? France was for me, moreover, no mere foreign land offering strange sights and the adventures of travel. For me France was the land whose history my father's ancestors had helped to shape, where they had lived in power and splendor for centuries and where, in the troublous times that had lately come upon her, a youth bearing the name I bore might win fame for himself and honor — if I could forget that my father's family had cast him out for marrying the girl who became my mother.

Again, as it had done a hundred times before, but now a hundred times more fiercely, my blood flamed up at the thought of that insult and injustice. Let Monsieur Georges de Mirecourt, Marquis de Remberville, find an heir where he could! He — for it was well known that my grandfather had done no more than his elder son's will — might have thought of his possible need of an heir before he intrigued his brother's disinheritance. And yet — How I welcomed the thought! — could he be more thoroughly humiliated than by being forced to ask for that brother's son, the

son of that despised marriage, to succeed him in his proud place?

"You do well not answer at once," my father said at last. "I can imagine your confusion of mind and I can sympathize with it."

"You would be going too?" I asked. For by this time the thought of leaving him alone in his weakened state had come uppermost in mind.

"Henri, if I were fit to go, I should be on that ship this moment." And a wave of his hand toward the window indicated the French packet, plainly visible from that height as she dropped down river on the first of the ebb. "France needs every sword and every loyal brain. But the doctor tells me I should not last a month at either politics or war in my present condition."

"Then you desire me to go?" I asked, and asked eagerly in the hope of having the matter settled for me.

"What I might desire is of no moment in this connection," he smiled, shaking his head at me. "Though I have made myself an American by law, I shall never cease to be a Frenchman at heart. You are half American by blood and wholly one by birth. It is simply a question of whether you wish to seek your fortune in France on account of the opportunities which will be open to you there."

"I don't believe I should care to be a French noble,"

I began, trying to argue down my intense desire to go. "Even before the Assembly abolished privileges and titles it cannot have been what it was when your ancestors —"

"Yours, too," he interjected gently.

"Yes, of course. I ask your pardon, sir. I only meant that in the old times the seigneurs were the natural leaders, the judges and protectors of their people. But to hang about the Court in order to amount to anything, or else to stay sunk on one's estates, content to lord it over the peasants and the tradesmen of some little country town —"

"My brother suggests an alternative or perhaps I should say, a special inducement," my father interrupted. "He has a ward, a girl of about your age, an heiress to very large estates, whom he thinks of marrying off to you, if you don't strike him as too unsuitable a *parti*. The Mirecourt fortunes are in great need of some such bolstering up since the recent reforms of feudal abuses and the like."

"He thinks of such a marriage now, at my age?" I exclaimed.

"You are not too young for marriage according to the customs of our class in France," my father replied. "Lafayette, remember, was married at eighteen."

"And left his wife within a year to get into the war over here," I commented scornfully.

"This girl is beautiful as well as rich," my father went on, teasingly, "an enthusiastic horsewoman, a country girl — She has never been to Court — hunts with English fox hounds up in northeastern France near Verdun, of all places. But in fairness I must add that she is high tempered. At least she has given her chap-eron some anxiety, my brother writes."

"Thank you. Or rather, thank your brother, sir," I returned drily. "But temper aside, I'm not seeking to make my fortune in that way."

"Ah, well, the idea is not mine," said my father. "I thought only that I had best prepare you for it. Even here rich girls don't often go begging, and over there marriages between heiresses and poor gentlemen of good birth are considered quite appropriate. But if you are too American to entertain that proposal, I wonder what you will say to the next one my brother has to make."

"It cannot be more unwelcome, I should think," I replied. My father laughed outright at my tone of lofty indignation but immediately became grave again.

"Do you remember ever having heard of the Red Prior's Ritual?" he asked.

"No, sir. I think not," I began. Then, "Stay," I cried. "Was it that queer verse mother used to sing sometimes when I was little? Wait. I almost have it — some of it:

*When the cross's top, by the candle-flare,
Shadows the arm of the Prior's chair. . .*

My father nodded and, as I continued to hesitate, completed the quatrain:

*"Nor dig nor delve at crow of cock,
But weep for the Blood of Antioch.*

"That's it — part of it, at least. I set it over into English to amuse your dear mother once when she was ill. You remember the legend?"

"The legend of the Red Prior's Legacy?" I asked bewildered. For I remembered so well the weird medieval tale of Jaques de Mirecourt, crusading Prior of the Knights Templars of the Priory of Remberville, and of a certain treasure he had hidden away against the future need of his house, that had my father mentioned Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves as having some bearing on our fortunes, it would have sounded to me no more fantastic.

He observed my stupefaction with a glance that presently ranged to the window behind me, where shingled roofs and smartly painted wooden steeples mingled with the slates and tiles of the small provincial metropolis.

"Hardly anything even a hundred years old out there," he remarked. "And you have seen nothing

older. I mustn't wonder that you boggle at believing this which happened five hundred years ago."

"You mean it really happened? You believe it?"

"Something so like it, at least, that you must seriously consider your uncle's proposal that you act upon it," he answered.

"You mean that he wishes me to go over there and try to find the treasure that old miscreant is supposed to have hidden away in the days of King Philip the Fourth?" I demanded.

"Precisely," my father replied. "But for that I doubt very much whether he would have asked for you at all."



CHAPTER III

THE MAN AT THE DOOR

THE tale was one of many about my father's family and old France with which my mother used to enliven the winter twilights when I was a little boy. With hair a bright fox-red like all the Mirecourts — so my mother used to begin — Jaques of that name, Prior of the Order of the Holy Temple, was fox-faced and fox at heart. Far gone in wickedness and the study of the Black Art, he sold his soul to the Devil for the promise of great wealth and the very next morning received orders to go to the Holy Wars in Palestine where presumably he would find a wider field for service of his new master. There at the siege of Antioch, when the Sultan of Egypt promised to spare the city on payment of a huge sum, the delivery of the ransom was entrusted to him. But he turned false to his trust, bought his own freedom with a small part of the money, and fled with the rest, leaving Antioch to massacre, pillage and fire. At Byzantium he condensed his ill-got gains into the form of seven great blood-red, hell-hearted rubies, whose fame and the whispered infamy of their getting gave them the name

of the blood of Antioch. He brought them back to his priory at Remberville, sewn beneath the skin of various parts of his body. But when he had become an old man his master, the Devil, demanded payment of his bond; and King Philip the Fourth, engaged just then in stamping out the wicked Order of the Temple through the length and breadth of his kingdom and, of course, all unaware that in this case he was doing the Devil's work for him, burnt the miserable Jaques alive at the gate of his priory.

The king searched in vain, however — so the legend ran — for the seven great rubies, each the price of a year of diabolical servitude. But their hiding-place was communicated by the forsworn prior to his nephew who was at that time head of the house, in the rhymed ritual in old French which for generations every boy of the family was required to learn by heart. The key to the inner meaning of these recondite quatrains was known only to each succeeding bearer of the title of Marquis of Remberville until such time as he thought his heir worthy to receive the secret. But under pain of the most appalling curses it was forbidden for anyone to touch the treasure until such time as the fortunes of the house of Mirecourt, and those of the royal house of Capet as well, should reach their lowest ebb. Then, and then only, the heir, going alone but at the orders of the head of the house, might exhume the rubies and

with their wealth restore the power of the monarchy and the splendor of the Mirecourts.

"And now, if ever," wrote my uncle, "is the accepted time. For if any fortunes are at a lower ebb than those of the royal house at this moment, they are those of the house of Mirecourt. For the mind of a nation may change as the mind of this one has changed a dozen times in the last twelve-month, but the interest of the money-lenders marches with time itself."

Such was the tale upon which I was invited to base my decision as to my future course in life at the culmination of an age that liked to regard itself as pre-eminently the age of reason! My father was not slow to understand my difficulty. Taken out of the legendary atmosphere that enshrouded it, he pointed out, there was nothing impossible in the tale. That Jaques de Mirecourt had been prior of the Templars at Remberville, had served in Palestine and been burned alive by order of Philip IV was as much a matter of history as the sack of Antioch by the Sultan Bibars itself. Treachery, wickedness, and the practice of the Black Art — whatever that may have amounted to — were, moreover, only too common in the latter days of the Order of the Knights of the Temple. As for the treasure having lain untouched in the sanctuary of the Abbey Church of Remberville for these five centuries — for such had been the character of the building since

the year 1312 — if one had seen the constant use of such a place, the uninterrupted observance of the canonical hours, the innumerable celebrations of the mass, one must realize how small a chance there had been for any unauthorized attempt to find it. In the ages of superstition, besides, the tradition of the curses resting upon it must have been its greatest safeguard, while in our own such skepticism as mine would give it an equal security.

It may have been that last shot that won my belief. I do not know, for just then my father's speech broke off short and he cried sharply:

"Henri, the door! Didn't you latch it? I'm quite sure you did."

Sure also was I, yet it was swinging noiselessly open. Then, even as I looked and had time to think that no breeze stirred the curtains at the window, it swung shut so violently that the hasp leaped and clicked into its catch. I had it open in two strides, but no one was there. The little, low-roofed triangular space of the landing was destitute of hiding-places. I flung my body across the rail, striving for a look at the stairs below, though it seemed impossible that anybody could have got so far. The landing immediately under ours was just as visible, and as empty, as ours was.

Then words of snapping French flew up to me.



SUCH A FIGURE I HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE

“What the devil — stop, you sly beast! What are you doing here?”

A low hiss answered, so sharp and full of meaning that one could almost see the gesture commanding silence that went with it. Then the voice came again, speaking English with studied distinctness:

“Can you tell me, my good fellow, if the Colonel de Mirecourt lodges here, and if so, on what floor?”

An indistinguishable grumble was the only reply; footfalls began to mount toward me; and presently round the corner from the middle flight appeared such a figure as I had never seen before. French by his speech, he was none of the refugee nobles, the *émigrés*, who for one reason or another had already begun to seek America rather than England or Germany as a place of safety; and we had not yet seen the new fashions of republican France, of which he must have been the first exponent on this side of the Atlantic. With brown hair floating free on his shoulders, a bright green coat cut away at the waist line redingote-fashion, waistcoat striped red and white, and the long ends of the tri-color cockade in his hat, which fell as low as the deep opening of his wide-collared, cravatless shirt, he might have been dressed for a costume ball in some misguided effort to represent the spirit of the springtime.

“Have I the honor to address the Citizen Colonel

Mirecourt?" he cried at sight of me, and swept off his hat in a profound bow.

"I am Colonel de Mirecourt's son," I replied. "If you wish to see him, I shall be glad to tell him your name and business. He has been ill and must spare himself from seeing unnecessary callers."

"I am Aristide Legardien," the young man replied; "a self-appointed legate, if I may so style myself, of the free people of France to the free people of America."

In the stronger light of the landing he presented an appearance as extraordinary in features and physique as it was in costume. His tight sleeves and pantaloons were molded to fleshless limbs. At the open neck of his shirt breast-bone and clavicles united in a visible articulation. Yet there was no suggestion of sickness in the color of his face. His long, thin nose turned upward, to expose the hairy interior of flaring nostrils. Slant eyes under slant eyebrows, and deep lines running from the nose to the corners of a large and mobile mouth, completed and enhanced a total effect of comicality and combined with his excessive thinness and the gay greenery of his attire to suggest one of those absurdly serious-looking insects that promenade among the grasses. He carried two fencing masks in his left hand together with a pair of foils which, granted the rest of the fanciful resemblance, might have been misplaced antennae.

"Be good enough to show the gentleman in," called my father through the open door.

Just inside the young man paused and made a second profound bow.

"Since you have heard the early part of my self-introduction, Citizen Colonel, I need only to add that it is as a disciple of the pen and the sword that I have the honor to wait upon you. Certain ones in Paris have believed that a journal devoted to the interests of French republicanism should thrive in this metropolis of pioneers. They delegated me for that purpose since, as a fencing master, I had the ready means of supporting myself till my pen had gained the necessary reputation to do so. They said, moreover, since I should need friends, none was likely to be more sympathetic or more useful than the Citizen Colonel Mirecourt."

"Pardon me," said my father coldly, "but here in these United States we have never been so little sure of our citizenship that we have had to resort to the grotesquerie of proclaiming it when we address one another, nor have I personally dropped the *de* from my name."

"I ask a thousand pardons," the young man replied quickly. "I had not supposed it possible in a free country. You must be aware, Monsieur le Colonel" — and he gave the slightest drawl of insolence to his pronunciation of the words — "that even the French As-

sembly, composed largely of noblemen, themselves voted to abolish the privileges, distinctions, and emoluments of their class."

"My brother writes me of it," my father replied with a gesture toward the letter that still lay open before him. His eyes narrowed in sharp observation of his caller as he spoke, and I, who had wondered at his words, since what our caller had told him had been known for a good while in New York, realized that his reference to my uncle and his letter were bait for a trap. A wild guess at the suspicion which had inspired his words sent a prickle of excitement through my scalp. The arrival of the letter at the bank by some unknown hand, the unseen listener at our door, the appearance of this plausible and strangely garbed creature, suddenly formed a logical sequence in my mind. Had the fellow started ever so slightly at sight of the letter? I could not be sure.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "from your brother? The *ci-devant* Marquis de Remberville, if I am not mistaken. You could have no more reliable source of information, surely."

My father ignored the leading tone in which this last remark was uttered.

"From these surroundings," said he, "you will guess that I am in no position to be of service to you, Monsieur Legardien."

"Pardon me if I do not quite credit that," the other replied. "In a new, free country like this it would be strange indeed, if it were exactly true. In France even we have already changed all that. At this moment in which we speak, the policy — the true policy of France — is being dictated by natural leaders from attic rooms to which this would seem a palace."

"A deplorable state of affairs, if it is true," my father commented with well-bred negligence.

"Deplorable, monsieur?"

"Certainly. A wise general does not direct a battle from the bottom of a ditch, if he can help it. To have to try to do so is in itself a confession of previous ineptitude. No, Monsieur Legardien. When you people over there have had freedom long enough to know what it is, you will know also that there is nothing in the poverty of attics to be admired for its own sake."

"Then you will not help me, monsieur?"

"I cannot help you, as you see."

"The name of Monsieur le Colonel de Mirecourt would be of great assistance to me in securing pupils for my fencing school, at least."

"If I had any way of forming an opinion of your proficiency as a teacher."

"Dare I suggest that Monsieur le Colonel honor me?" Legardien held up the foils and masks.

"Henri, be good enough to oblige this gentleman,"

said my father with an air of perfect good humor. "You will find my son not an altogether contemptible adversary, monsieur." And while we slipped off our coats and waistcoats and turned up our wristbands, he examined the masks and measured and tested the foils, twisting the buttons on their points with the care of the experienced fencer who knows the possible danger of such things.

Legardien and I must have made a strangely different pair as we confronted each other. My height and size gave me the advantage of reach and strength, but his small, spare frame was bound to excell me in quickness; and as our blades touched, I felt a throb from his like the pent-up energy in a taut steel wire. Then the whole thing was over and done so swiftly that my mind hardly registered the details of it.

He disengaged and lunged in tierce, missing me by so little that his blade caught in my turned-up sleeve, bending like a bow and hampering my riposte. Something whirred and landed with a clang among the luncheon dishes. My father's chair crashed over as he leaped to his feet.

"*Halte!*" he cried. "Your foil has snapped, monsieur!"

But I heard these sounds as faintly as if they came from another room. The jagged end of Legardien's blade was driving full at my throat. I parried for dear

life, drove in my riposte by instinct, and realized a fraction of a second too late that instead of parrying, as he was bound to do by the rules of the game, he had drawn back his hilt for a thrust straight at my unguarded breast, while into mine his slant eyes glared cold murder. Next instant he was reeling back from me, gasping, blinded, the clotted contents of my father's chocolate-pot streaming from the mask that covered his face. With one bound my father had torn the broken foil out of his grasp. Then we three stood, encompassed, as it seemed, in a kind of sphere of silence that shrank and shrank, pressing us together, isolating us from all else in the world, until it could shrink no smaller and shivered into speech.

"Henri, be so good as to hand Monsieur Legardien a napkin to dry his face." My father's words fell upon that stillness like fragments of thin ice. "Your foil snapped, monsieur. I called to you, but you did not hear me. So I took the only way at my disposal of stopping you in time. Henri, hold Monsieur Legardien's mask for him," he went on in the same chill tone. "Now his coat and waistcoat, if you please. Here are the masks and foils, monsieur — all but this" — he held up the three-inch fragment of foil blade with the button on the end of it — "which with your indulgence I will keep as a souvenir of this interesting occasion. Your hat, monsieur. Permit me."

Legardien stared at him a moment longer, as he had been staring since he had cleared his eyes of the chocolate. His face, a whitish green about the lips, shaded to mottled red on jaws and cheekbones. The serio-comic insect still, he was that insect drowned in a douche of chilly rain-water. Strung to the pitch of murder, he had snapped like a drawn string at his frustration. One would no more have guessed the hidden venom in him now than at his first appearance. He received the foils and masks mechanically and stuck them beneath his left arm with fumbling fingers. His hat in his right hand alone seemed to have the power to restore him, as by the touch of a thing of common habit. He gave his shoulders a shake and thrust his thin chest outward to the hiss of a breath drawn between clenched teeth. But the smile which he attempted was ghastly in its patent mechanism.

"Only a nobleman of nature's making could excuse my monstrous blunder, monsieur, as you have done," he began slowly. "Of none other might one dare to hope for a recommendation as fencing-master after what has occurred."

My father bowed.

"You do me too much honor, monsieur. Confine your hopes, I beg, to one, namely, that I do not recommend you to the police as an assassin. Henri, the door for Monsieur Legardien — and bolt it after him."

"Now what," I exclaimed, when the sound of the fellow's dragging steps had died away down the stairs, "can be the meaning of all that?"

"Murder," my father answered, his eyes blazing though his tone was still like ice.

"But the breaking of the foil must have been accidental."

"Doubtless. But the chance it seemed to give him went to his head. There lay that letter on the table. With you dead or disabled, he meant to make short work of me. Then the letter was his."

"The letter? You think —"

"Certainly. Something about its purpose leaked out in France. More than one person has interested himself in it. Consider the swinging of the door just as we were discussing the secret of the rubies. Stupid or highly romantic, these people suppose that the letter contains directions for finding them. This young vagabond, with his trumped-up errand, comes up here to look the ground over, probably with a view to burglary, and cannot resist the chance which that breaking foil appears to afford him."

I told him of the encounter on the stairs which I had heard from the landing. He nodded.

"But I don't understand how such people could have heard of the business at all," I objected.

"That is quite simple," he assured me. "Some bab-

bling valet or scheming secretary would explain it doubtless. Used to being served all his life, a great noble can commit nothing to paper and keep it to himself. This rascal and his accomplices probably shadowed the bearer of that letter across the Atlantic in a vain attempt to rob him of it. Probably they lost track of him and decided to begin at this end. Chance will account for the rest. And now, "he said briskly, "we must be careful lest this episode take possession of us too strongly. I mean to set myself to transcribing from your uncle's letter the political information our friend the counselor so ardently desires. I suggest that you lay out on your bed all of your clothes so that we may see what additions must be made to your wardrobe here and what had best be left until you arrive in France — should you decide to go."

"Decide!" I exclaimed on impulse. "I'm going!" And then I stood ashamed of my forgetfulness — for how could I leave him with no one to care for him?

"You have decided? You are going? My boy, embrace me," he cried, and immediately suited the action to the word, a proceeding which is no such effeminate business, at least between a boy and his father, as we repressed, provincial Americans choose to think it.



CHAPTER IV

FOOTPADS!

AND who would take care of you, if I went?" I objected, when at last he held me at arm's length, smiling while the frank French tears rolled slowly down his thin cheeks.

"Old Joshua, of course. I can pay him now." He meant his body-servant, a negro whom he had purchased in Virginia during the Yorktown campaign, liberated, and kept about him until poverty had compelled him to leave the old man in his little house close to our big one across the river. "Joshua will be pleased. I'll take the rooms under these to escape the summer's heat and live like a lord while you're off, getting your start in the world."

"Good lord," I exclaimed. "There's another thing, too — that girl! If I accept this offer, am I committed to her?"

"Why not wait to cross that stream until you come to it?" my father asked gravely. "Even in France a girl cannot be married off by main force, and I gather that this young lady has a will of her own. She may refuse even to look at you," he added, grinning at me.

"You know what I meant," I grumbled.

"Well, I just thought I might be able to keep you from worrying too much about it," he bantered, and took up his pen.

My task was not a considerable one. My wardrobe had not been replenished for a year. So my selection was boiled down to the clothes I had on, the suit I tried to save for Sundays, and a few shirts and undergarments that seemed most likely to stand the wear of a voyage. I made a pile of these for my father's inspection — I must have new shoes, but my winter greatcoat would serve for shipboard — and since the steady scratching of his pen still came to me from the next room, I sat down on the bed and gave myself up to splendid day-dreams of my future. The treasure found and the fortunes of the Mirecourts re-established, I saw myself a pupil at the *École Militaire* or, supposing that war should come between France and Austria, I would be a gentleman-volunteer and charge with the locked ranks of the *Maison du Roi*, the household cavalry of the French king.

A feeble-sounding knock at the door from the landing aroused me. I jumped to answer it, but my father was ahead of me. Looking past him through the opening, I saw one of the most repulsive sights that has ever affronted my vision. A beggar crouched on the threshold, so bent that his head came hardly to my



father's waist. A mat of hair half covered his filthy face, though not so much as to hide the single blood-shot eye. The other socket was red and empty under the wrinkled lid. A twisted nose and gap-tooth, tobacco-stained mouth made up the rest of the face. But in spite of his deformity there was something of the seafaring-man about him, a fresh smear of tar on the shoulder of the blue and white jersey whose rags let the dull gray skin show through on chest and upper

arms, a sailor's knife on a lanyard around his neck. The worst of him was a running ulcer which one bent knee thrust through his ragged pantaloons.

"Ees it 'ere somebody spik ze *bon* French language?" he whined. "Somebody gif *un pièce de cinq sous* for ze *pauvre matelot* who 'ave lost ees right eye fighting against ze Bloody Anglaises?"

"No!" thundered my father, and with a drive of his knee against the fellow's shoulder — for as he spoke, the man was edging across the threshold — sent him flying backward, heels over head, and slammed the door.

"That makes three of them, counting the one you heard on the stairs," he said with a gay smile. "I think we had best draw them tonight and smash their formation. What would you say to our supping at Fraunce's? We owe ourselves some small celebration for the events of the day; and, if we return before moon-rise, I with my sword and you with that old footman's staff of Joshua's, we may discover how much these gentry are willing to risk for a look at our letter. What say you, monsieur, to my invitation to supper, with swords and cudgels for two or a half-dozen?"

"I say that, if we use the weapons, you will be a well man at the rate you are going, Father," I laughed, speaking in English. Somehow I never could joke with my father in French. But in sober fact I had not seen that sparkle in his eyes, that buoyancy in his bearing, since

my mother died. It did not leave him during the whole afternoon, while in the pauses of his letter-writing we discussed the ways and means of my journey; and it was with his old, light step of more than a year ago that he led me down the stairs and out into the level rays of the sunset.

The landlord himself hurried toward us at sight of so old a customer as my father and one who had been so long absent from his house of entertainment. He would have led us to a private room, but my father had had quite enough of privacy in his winter in bed, he assured him, and begged to be given a table to ourselves in a corner of the ordinary.

"This is excellent," he pronounced, seating himself so as to face the room, with a brisk fire of small sticks crackling on the hearth on his right hand, and within reach of his left the heavy red curtain of one of the windows. "Here we can see to a certain extent and — what is equally to our purpose — be seen." He gave the curtain a twitch and peered out, shielding his eyes from the candle-light with his hand.

"I think," he said, "that our one-eyed nautical friend has already taken his post in a doorway opposite, yet we didn't see him as we came along, or catch him following us. An active fellow in spite of appearances. That ulcer on his knee is an admirable bit of realistic painting evidently. I suspected as much.

"Grilled shad, waiter," he broke off, as the man bent to receive his order. "A roast wild duck to follow. And pray tell your master that I beg a bottle of my favorite burgundy — he will remember the bin — if it was not all drunk up last winter."

With such revelations as my father's glance through the window had furnished for *hors d'œuvres* you may wonder perhaps that excitement should leave me much appetite. But you must not forget my ten days of short rations. Also there was an infectiousness about my father's gaiety. If he had been a young man bound for a ball, instead of the middle-aged semi-invalid, bent on bringing down upon himself the attack of a desperate gang of robbers, that he was, he could not have been merrier or set me a better example in doing justice to the food and wine.

"Go into the tap-room," he directed, when the cheese had been set before us. "If our friend, the murderous fencing-master is there, as I think he will be, avoid appearing to see him at all costs. Tell Jim, the barman, you came in to get the exact time, and add, as if in pleasantry, that you must be getting your father home to bed."

In the tap-room sure enough I caught sight of the green redingote and tricolor cockade. Seated inconspicuously in a corner with a glass of gin-and-water before him, their owner was nevertheless so placed that

he could observe through a wicket behind the bar all who came and went between the ordinary and the main door.

"We'll give him three minutes start of us to perfect his arrangements," said my father when I had reported this, and he savored the last of his wine with a morsel of cheese. "Nervous? Well, don't let that upset you. A fight's a fight, whether it's in a city street or on the field of Minden. You'll find yourself quite cool as soon as you get into action."

I certainly hoped so as we stepped into the street, I with the footman's staff stuck up the right sleeve of my greatcoat till it looked no more than an ordinary walking-stick, and my father's old military cloak so draped about him as to hide his sword but ready on the instant to free his right arm for action. For the pulse was thudding in my throat and my knees and elbows were stiff with nervousness.

"I trust we didn't make too much of a parade of our weapons on our way hither," my father whispered as we traversed the empty street. "I trust I haven't let us linger so long that the moonlight will frighten them off."

In his pleasure at being at large again he had indeed let us linger over our dessert a good deal later than we had intended. Already the eaves of the houses on the western side of the street were beginning to shine with

the moonrise; and when, advancing as cautiously as we thought we might without the appearance of suspicion, we reached the crossing of Wall and Broad Streets, the moonbeams flooded the pavement so that each stone stood out clear and the arched passages beneath the town hall, which stood in the intersection of the two streets at that time, looked like the avenues of a grove, with each dark vista lanced by shafts of misty light.

“We had best keep clear of the arches, I think.” My father paused as he spoke and, even as he did so, a jagged stone whirled between our heads so close that the wind of it struck my cheek a tiny blow. Something thudded softly on the massed folds of the cloak on my father’s shoulder, rebounded clinking to the pavement, and lay there, a sailor’s knife with the long blade shining. A screech of baffled fury rang out of the darkness of the street from which we had just emerged. A whistle answered ahead of us; and two dark figures sprang at us from the shadows of the arches. I met the first, a huge hulking fellow with a cudgel in his right hand and a knife in his left and sent him staggering back from a lunge of my staff that came straight out of my father’s lessons in bayonet exercise. But my point missed his belly, where it would have put him out of action for that night at least, and I had him back at me just as the cutlass of his companion, a swift, stooping

fellow by the glimpse I caught of him, ground on the forte of my father's small-sword.

With my longer weapon I could keep my antagonist at a distance. But not again would he lay himself open to my attack. I drew back, hoping to lead him to uncover himself. Somehow I must dispose of him quickly, for I could hear behind me the clash and grind of the heavy cutlass, which at the slightest slip of my father's swordsmanship would shatter his light blade to fragments. His strength, too, ill as he had been, could not last him long. And feet were running toward us — a swift, light pair from the arches of the town hall, a rapid, shuffling pair from the street behind us. Legardien and the misshapen sailor?

A full lunge sent my adversary leaping back two strides. I seized the interval to swing upon my father's assailant, glimpsed Legardien, almost upon us already, the blade of a sword-cane held out straight before him as he ran. Then the loaded knob of my staff caught the cutlass-man close to his ear. He went down like a dead man, lax limbs and head crashing on the cobblestones. I whirled again to meet my own man's fresh onslaught and heard my father's blade click and slither on that of the fencing-master.

Twenty feet behind my opponent was the foul beggar of the afternoon. His had been the flung knife, of course. Ape-like, his head writhed back to carry his

head like other men, he stooped above it now, snatched it and drew it back to hurl again. Should I shout and warn my father? To what end? He could not fight and dodge the flying knife simultaneously. The question answered itself between blow and guard. Then a body thudded on the pavement to the whistle of sharp-drawn breath; my father's voice said coolly:

"It is finished, that lesson, I think;" and above the clatter of twenty pairs of running feet two pistol-shots cracked from the level of the pavement just behind me. My antagonist flung up his arms, his weapons whirling off into the moonlight, and fell face downward, a bullet through his head. The cripple rolled backward over and over into the shadows. And beside us, supporting himself on his right elbow, smoke curling from both barrels of the small pistol in his right hand, Legardien turned a reproachful glance from us to the stain that spread slowly from a small slit in the breast of his redingote. Next moment a patrol of the watch was swarming round us, and my father was saying to the constable:

"I call upon you to arrest this man on a charge of attempting highway-robbery."

"This man? This gentleman on the ground?" cried a voice full of righteous indignation. "Why he saved you, sir. But for his shooting that sailor would have sent his knife through your back." The speaker

shouldered his way through the gathering crowd of late passers-by and half-dressed householders. "I saw it all, I tell you, heard the clash of steel and came running up the street from Fraunce's."

He was a tall young man, too fat by far for his twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, dressed in the regimentals of the American dragoons; and he snapped his heavy sabre back into its scabbard as if to indicate the execution he would have done with it, had he been a moment sooner. I had noticed him at the tavern, dining at a table in the corner opposite ours, and drinking wine enough to account for the present confusion of his ideas, I now thought. He dropped on his knees at Legardien's side and immediately stood up again with a face of the greatest solemnity.

"He wishes to speak to you and your son, sir. That is, if you are Colonel de Mirecourt."

"I seem to be singularly ill-fated in my contacts with you two gentlemen," said Legardien when we had knelt down beside him. "But from the performance of my pistol I think you will believe me when I say that I ran up to render to you my poor assistance."

"Then you certainly took a strange way to begin," my father returned coldly. "It were easier to believe that your shots were intended for us but were guided by Providence to more appropriate targets."

"Monsieur le Colonel," the other replied solemnly,

and paused as if breathless to press a handkerchief to his lips, "I ran up to take your antagonist in the rear; your son at that moment disposed of the man. Thereupon, Monsieur, seeing me before you with sword extended, you quite naturally engaged with me — *ma foi*, with what vigor, what skill, what *élan*! Too breathless to call out to you my true purpose, too closely pressed by your attack even to break off the fight and flee, I could but defend myself until you ran me through the body."

"Do you hear that now?" the dragoon demanded triumphantly. "Listen, you people, while I tell you what this Frenchman says. I know French. I'll translate it for you. Then you can see whether he ought to be arrested." And he proceeded to proclaim the gist of Legardien's explanation, adding that a man ought to be believed when he was in the article of death.

My father had knelt again at Legardien's side. He thrust his arm to the elbow within Legardien's shirt, drew it out, wiped his fingers on his handkerchief and tossed the handkerchief away.

"This man is very far from death, unless it be from the halter," he said contemptuously. "Come here, constable, and see for yourself. My thrust glanced along his ribs, as I thought at the time. My son and I will appear in court against him in the morning."

"Well, of all the pieces of pig-headed stupidity and ingratitude!" exclaimed the dragoon, thrusting his

shoulders forward so that his lieutenant's epaulettes caught the lantern-light. "The Bourbons themselves could be guilty of no worse. I assure you, sir, that you will have to answer to me on the witness-stand in the morning."

"You will be sober in the morning, sir," my father retorted. "Constable, I charge this man who calls himself Legardien equally with the other three."

"Three?" echoed the constable. "We have but one, sir; and he's as dead as Peter Stuyvesant."

And, sure enough, of the crippled sailor, of the man with the cutlass, whom I had struck down with my staff, not a trace was to be found. A woman called from an upper window that the latter had crawled away between the legs of the crowd. But nobody had seen the former after he had rolled out of the moonlight, and there was no sign of blood to show that Legardien's bullet had even grazed him. The watch, it was said, searched all night, but neither man was ever seen in New York again, I believe. Legardien was carried away on an improvised litter to the lock-up, the dragoon lieutenant following along with loud denunciations of what he called the stupid and tyrannous conduct of my father. From somewhere in the crowd he had picked up the fact that my father had been born a French noble and that Legardien was supposed to be an apostle of French liberty. From that moment his

zeal knew no bounds. He saw the Rights of Man in jeopardy in the Frenchman's person and my father as the incarnation of the wickedness of the *ancien régime*. You will find a good many Americans whose minds work that way even today.

"This turns out very well," said my father, as we made our way towards home, "but only so far as it has gone. We cannot postpone your departure for France while we wait until he is brought to trial, unpleasant though it may be for us to have the villain at large. Whenever you go out at night from now on, remember to go armed."



CHAPTER V

LIEUTENANT JEFFERSON GARTH

MY FATHER and I lingered long over our breakfast next morning. Across the flashing roofs the tempered breeze of May brought warm smells of leaf and blossom to our sun-flooded windows. Conscious that I had played a man's part against men armed with deadly weapons — my father had said as much — I thrilled with a new confidence in myself at thought of the adventure in France that lay before me. My father's appearance showed that his recovery had suffered no check from last night's encounter. And, best of all — though perhaps I ought to be ashamed to admit it — I need not go out again on that bitter round of job hunting. The memory of that hour remains to me as one of the happiest in my life. So, when I opened our door in answer to a knock and found the young officer of dragoons standing at the threshold, I bade him enter with a smiling civility which evidently put him out of countenance.

He had come to offer his apologies, he announced, for any offensive expressions which he might have used last night. And this he proceeded to do with a solemn

ceremoniousness that showed the importance which he attached to such an action on his part. Fraunce's wine must be his excuse, as it must account for his not identifying Colonel de Mirecourt as the Colonel de Mirecourt whose record in the late war was still remembered with admiration in the army.

But on the other hand — he puffed his florid cheeks, pouted his full red lips, and swelled his portly chest until the blue coat strained at the brass buttons; and his tone assumed a sort of modulated bluster — if Colonel de Mirecourt should consider this apology inadequate, Jefferson Garth of the United States Dragoons stood quite as ready to give him the satisfaction one gentleman owes another in such circumstances as any officer who had served at Monmouth or the Brandywine.

My father, smiling, hastened to assure him that his apology went even further than the situation demanded. But he became grave when the young man proceeded to reopen the discussion of Legardien's part in the fray of the night before.

"Nothing has occurred to alter my opinion on that subject, Mr. Garth," he said quietly.

"You still believe that he fired at you and your son and, missing you both, actually hit your two assailants? A most extraordinary coincidence, surely!"

"He appears to have missed the sailor, too," my

father corrected him. "But there remains still another possible explanation of his action."

"You believe that a man would fire on his confederates then?" The lieutenant's tone was one of outrage at so low an imputation against any human creature.

"Most men would not, of course," my father replied. "But a very precious rascal and bloody-minded ruffian, such as I have reason to believe this Legardien to be, might very likely do so in the circumstances. He lies on the ground, too badly wounded to get away. The combat is reduced to couples, the sailor against me, my son here against the man with the cudgel. Moreover, he can hear you running up Broad Street, the watch pounding down Wall. So, even if he shoots us, his confederates cannot hope to get away if they attempt to carry him off with them. He will be captured in any event. Now what shall he do? With the address of the singularly clever and ruthless criminal I take him for he fires at his confederates, killing one of them, and so lays a foundation upon which with his perfect effrontery he can build his defense. Is not this after all more likely than his tale of blundering into a combat with me in which I am supposed to press him so hotly that he cannot even shout out his laudable intentions or run away?"

Lieutenant Garth did not reply at once, but sat, tapping his lips with the finger-tips of one large hand, on

the back of which the thick red hair turned golden in the sunshine. Finally he gave a fat sort of laugh.

"Very clever, Colonel. Very ingenious at first sight, but found to be based on quite unproved assumptions when one examines it. You speak of his confederates. By what right? How do you know they were his confederates? Answer me that. Counselor Mygatt will make short work of that fine theory of yours in court, I wager, sir."

"Counselor Mygatt!" The exclamation escaped my father in astonishment, for Counselor Mygatt had reached such a place in his profession that he seldom appeared in court and never in a criminal case.

"Oh, you'll have no cheap shyster to deal with, I assure you, I assure you," blustered Garth. "Mygatt's peculiar, but he took the case like a shot when I told him how a generous impulse had got an innocent foreigner wounded and thrown into jail. He's like me, I guess. When I see anybody tyrannized over, my blood just boils. I'm for the under-dog every time."

"Even though the dog may quite possibly be a rabid cur, Mr. Garth?" And my father gave me a sly glance as if to ask whether I had noticed this generous characteristic in the lawyer.

"Give him a chance to show what he is, anyhow. That's my motto," Garth retorted, glowing evidently with self-satisfaction. "That's why I'm going to

France. That's why I've thrown up my commission in the United States Army. There's a whole nation of under-dogs over there, and I'm going to help them."

"You are going to France to aid the revolution?" my father asked in wonder. "You have resigned from our army for that purpose?"

"I certainly have. France needs trained officers, with all those nobles, who have drawn their pay and done no work for it, deserting to her enemies. But I'm not going till I set Legardien free, if it takes me all summer. And now, sir —" he rose, picked up his hat and bowed with a flourish — "since I take it I've had your last word, I'll be off. I wish you, sir, and you, young sir" — with a bow to me and a tone insufferably patronizing — "a very good morning."

"Poor youth!" exclaimed my father, when Garth's spurred heels had clattered out of hearing down the stairs. "Lucky for him I am dropping the charge, or Mygatt and that French rascal would bleed him white between them."

"You didn't tell him you were going to drop it," I commented.

"No," said my father, "and I don't intend to until I have to. I mean that Legardien shall at least get a proper scare out of this, if I can give it to him."

In consequence of my father's decision Legardien went scot-free a few days later. The coroner's jury,

obviously impressed by Counselor Mygatt's mere appearance in behalf of the prisoner, found that Legardien had fired only to defend himself and us from a gang of midnight malefactors and dismissed him with a compliment for his skill and daring from the lips of the coroner himself. But now Legardien surprised us. The French packet, which we had seen setting sail, had grazed a ledge in Hell Gate and returned to make sure she had suffered no serious damage, and when she departed the second time, Legardien went with her. He went, indeed, in a kind of triumph, cheered by Lieutenant Garth and a considerable group of amateur Jacobins whom the latter got together for the occasion.

It seems strange to me now that my father and I took this sudden departure for the flight of a frightened and discouraged enemy. Why, I ask myself, did it not seem to us suspicious that Counselor Mygatt should have taken a criminal case — a mere police-court case, as it turned out — for the paltry fee which, after all, was the most that Garth and Legardien could have scraped together? We ought to have known the lawyer's trained mind would not have been for one moment deceived by Legardien's account of his actions in the attack on us, and that by holding over him the fear of imprisonment and even of death he could have had but little trouble in wringing from him his real motive. But such a thing never crossed our minds. It never



occurred to either of us until too late that the lawyer's interest in my uncle's letter might go further than the political news of which my father gave him a digest according to the terms of their agreement. To have imagined that in the hard, dry, dollars-and-cents make-up of the lawyer there lurked something that would thrill to action at the romantic tale of the Red Prior's hidden treasure would have struck us both as merely fantastic. As for Legardien, he carried with him in-

formation of more value for his purpose than my uncle's letter would have been. This came about simply because I chanced to book my passage on the morning before he sailed, and Garth, booking his on the same vessel that afternoon, saw my name and told him we were to be fellow-passengers.

But what with my own preparations and the installation of my father in his new quarters, we had little time to ponder the events of the past in the scant three weeks that intervened between Legardien's departure and mine. When I sailed, my father accompanied me until the vessel came opposite New London. There the captain obligingly stood in toward the river's mouth and hailed a homeward-bound fishing-boat to set him ashore. And it was only in the moment of parting that he mentioned the fencing-master as likely to give me further trouble.

"Begin by trying to find out whence the rascal obtained his knowledge of your uncle's letter and its purpose," he added, "whether it was by accident or through some disloyal servant. There may well be a spy in his household."

He took a nervous turn or two up and down the deck, his eyes on the approaching boat, slipped his arm through mine and drew it against his side.

"Have I been plain enough about my brother?" he burst out impulsively. "I fear that a false sense of

shame has tied my tongue when I would have warned you against him as I ought to have done. He is a thoroughly bad man. That is the honest truth of it. He was never to be trusted. You must not trust him even now. It happens that he needs you. But do not place your confidence in that. While he uses you — nay, in the very way in which he uses you he may be arranging for your destruction at the moment when you have accomplished his purpose. I begin, indeed, to ask myself whether I am not a fool to expose you to his machinations. Had I seen anything but years of common drudgery ahead of you here, I would never have allowed you to go. Do you still wish to go in view of what I have just said? It is not too late to return even now. To fetch your things from your cabin will take but an instant.”

He fixed his eyes upon me anxiously, eagerly. In that moment I believe he hoped with all his heart that I would return to New York with him.

“Of course I wish to go, Father,” I smiled at him, and would have said more, had not Garth, who had been loitering nearer than a man of fine sensibilities would have thought decent, approached at that moment to say farewell. My father turned to him with an instant resumption of his usual manner.

“*Bon voyage, Monsieur le Lieutenant.* May you win a civic wreath, or whatever it is that you sturdy re-

publicans may put in the place of the cross of Saint Louis. Only have a care that in striking a blow for liberty you don't strike two for anarchy and license."

"God keep you, my son." And with a final embrace he swung himself through the gangway and down the pilot's ladder.

I watched until the boat that carried him was lost in the throng of small craft making for the breakwater in the slant sunlight of the late afternoon, and turned to find Garth still close beside me.

"Born *grand seigneur*, it's hard for the old man to sympathize with the struggle for human liberty, isn't it?" he remarked.

"Of course," I agreed sarcastically. "He only spent seven years of his life fighting for it."

"For liberty? Call that liberty we've got back there?" He threw out his hand contemptuously toward the Connecticut shore. "Fine sort of liberty the Federalists give us, with President Washington in his state coach, Hamilton robbing the people with his financial chicane, the hereditary society of the Cincinnati, and all the rest of it!"

"You prefer the mob that murdered the French queen's guards in her bedroom, I suppose."

He laughed with patronizing good nature.

"Of course I don't. But a man isn't a villain just because he's a republican; and that's what your father

seems to think. Oh, yes, he does. Look at the way he feels about Aristide Legardien! Aristide would like to have thanked him for dropping the charge against him. But he knew he'd be snubbed if he tried it. By the way, he asked me to tell you that, if he could find the opportunity to do so while you are in France, he would be sure to repay his debt of gratitude."

I glanced at Garth sharply, wondering if it were possible that he was unconscious of the veiled threat which this message contained. But a glance was enough. The earnest good nature of his face left no doubt that he truly believed in Legardien's kindly intentions toward me. He went right on:

"Aristide says you cannot expect much help from your uncle. The *ci-devant* Marquis de Remberville was such a bitter enemy of all reform, both in the States General and in the first Assembly, that his name stinks through the length and breadth of France, it seems. You might even be arrested the moment you land, he says, on account of your name being de Mirecourt, if he weren't going to be waiting for me at Brest when this vessel reaches there."

So that was why our enemy had taken so hurried a departure! I should find him on the dock, awaiting me, with a warrant for my arrest already made out. But my uneasiness on this account did not last long. If Legardien should cause my arrest, it would doubtless be

for the sake of obtaining possession of my uncle's letter, and when he found that it told nothing of how to find the treasure, he must manage to set me free again. For only by keeping track of me and following my movements after I had seen my uncle could he come at the treasure — or so I confidently believed. By bedtime I was more concerned at the prospect of being cooped up for weeks in the same ship with a bore like Garth than I was by worry over the dangers that lay ahead of me in France. Next morning, when I came on deck to smell the strong, clean wind on our quarter and see the bulging spires of canvas sweep back and forth against a blue sky scoured by clouds whiter than the sails themselves, I was met by the news that Lieutenant Garth did not care for any breakfast. In fact he turned out to be a singularly poor sailor, and our passage to be rather a rough one for the time of year.

I gave myself up to the unalloyed pleasure which a first voyage affords to one who loves the sea. Each day I devoted several hours to the study of events in France in the past three years as these were set forth in the old files of Paris newspapers which my father had obtained for me from the French consulate in New York. To know well the names of the leaders over there, of the new men who had appeared out of the upheaval, and to understand what they stood for, might be of paramount importance to me in a world which more and more

they seemed likely to be directing. For recreation I had the whole vessel to roam over and a kindly captain and mate who responded to my interest by trying to teach me all that I could learn of navigation and seamanship. The bracing air and hearty food, and the healthy and interesting exercise which these lessons entailed, restored the strength, the initiative, and the courage which my winter of anxiety and hard work on short rations had done much to deprive me of.

Though I still saw the difficulties and dangers which I must overcome, I found good reasons for believing that I should succeed in doing so. It was true that my uncle was no longer the rich and powerful noble I had begun by imagining, the gay and wicked Marquis de Remberville, Count of Mirecourt, lay Abbot of the Abbey of Remberville, Baron of the Holy Roman Empire, gentleman of the king's bed-chamber, titular colonel of a regiment which he had hardly ever seen, and holder of I know not how many other sinecures; a man of exquisite fashion, a brilliant and merciless duelist. His extravagance, gambling, and speculation had delivered his great estates to the money-lenders. The self-denying legislation of the Assembly, which had abolished pensions, honorary salaries and feudal dues, had reduced him almost to penury. Evil living had made of him an old man with broken health at sixty.

But the finding of the treasure would mend his for-

tunes; I alone could find it for him under the terms of the ancient legacy; and wily and treacherous though he might be, it would be strange, I thought, if I did not wring from him such terms as would insure not only my safety after the treasure had been found but my father's full share of it as well. And suddenly I would come to myself with a start to discover that, although my papers and note-book were spread before me, my mind had been spinning splendid day-dreams of what I should then attain to.

Sometimes, the treasure found and transformed in the jewel market of Amsterdam into a heap of shining gold, I saw myself spiriting the king and queen out of Paris by a combination of daring, adroitness and bribery and conducting them to the loyal army on the frontier in a flight that avoided every one of that series of dismal blunders which had ended in the capture of the royal family at Varennes just a year ago. Again I imagined that I had aroused the middle-class citizens of Paris to a sense of their responsibilities, animated the National Guard as Lafayette had failed to do, and reared around the Tuileries and the Assembly a human rampart from which the constitutional king could recover the government of his kingdom. But always at the end I was kneeling under a shower of rewards and favors from the hands of grateful sovereigns. These I put aside, content with my father's share of the Red

Prior's legacy, wrapped myself in the simplicity of my American citizenship and bowed myself from the royal presence amid universal applause. So you see that while cares and responsibilities had made me too old for my years in some respects, I became very much my proper age the moment I escaped from them.

Of one other thing that lay before me, of my meeting with Mademoiselle de Renois, my uncle's ward, I consciously thought not at all. His tentative suggestion of the possibility of a marriage between us had seemed so absurd to my American notion on such things that I had relegated it to the lumber-room of the impossible. I would have protested at the time that the girl never entered my head. But now, as I think it over, I am not so sure. Did not her fine eyes beam admiringly upon me from among the maids of honor behind the queen on those great occasions that celebrated the success of my efforts for the royal house? I think they did. I am sure that in my dreams at night — those dreadful nightmares in which all the fears which I was able to reason away in my waking hours triumphed over me — she was present more than once. Her slim, long hands strained with mine at a great paving-stone in the floor of the sanctuary of Remberville church, and we started back together from the baleful glare of the seven great hell-hearted rubies lying in the open grave before us amid a heap of skulls. She reeled in her terror so

that I had to catch her in my arms. But when we fled together through the damp, dim passages of the crypt, it was the clasp of her strong fingers on my wrist that guided me, her hand dipped in the holy water at the door that drove back, shrieking, the red phantom of the wicked prior with the sign of the cross.

We had been almost six weeks at sea when I came on deck one morning to find the ship hove to, rocking gently on the ground swell, and under the green-gray downs that topped them the chalk cliffs of Brittany shining with a peculiar gleam through the mists of sunrise. Jefferson Garth made his appearance on deck shortly after, and by the time breakfast was over he seemed to permeate the ship. Seasick? Nonsense. He had been ill, of course. Too much farewell dinner with some brother officers the night before he sailed. His fat laugh implied prodigies of valedictory libation. But seasick? He didn't know what it meant to have the sea upset him.

He informed everybody of the commission in the French Army, which awaited him at Brest, and on the strength of his expectations constituted himself advisor, tutor, and guide to every passenger whom he could induce to confide to him his perplexities. Speaking the French-Canadian *patois* which he had picked up at some frontier garrison in northern New York, he became a flowing spring of information on French idioms,

the French way of doing things, the French point of view, at which any who chose might water his ignorance. He became an authority on the validity of passports. He shook his head over the prospect of trouble and delay for those who had no other introduction to France than a document whose visa ran in the name of the king, pointing out that the officials of the new republic, which we should undoubtedly find established there, would look with a natural suspicion upon all such. His entrance into the country depended upon no such commonplace instrument. And he pulled from his breast a case of oiled silk, which he tapped mysteriously. "The little fellows at the *douane*" would bow and scrape when they caught a glimpse of the contents of that, we should see.

When the swift, brown-sailed pilot-boat scudded alongside, he was first among the crowd that clustered about the pilot, eager for news from the land. But here he met with signal defeat, for it would have been hard to say whether his Canadian French or the pilot's Breton dialect was the more incomprehensible to the other. What the man had to tell, and what I laboriously understood and translated for want of anybody else to do it, was not calculated to put him in a better humor.

There were all sorts of stories going about certainly, the man admitted, but what did he know? Paris

stories about Paris people — a bad lot those! But yes, there was the war, he believed. Away to the east the Prussians and Austrians were marching, it was said. There was much trouble in Paris. He believed that, too. They said that a mob of many thousands had burst into the king's palace there one day last month and kept the king — he paused to take off his cap and put it on again — the queen and the little dauphin standing all day while they filed past. But this seemed to him unlikely. What would the king's guards have been doing all that time — what the good people of Paris? And there must be some, many good people in a place so big. In so big a town the priests alone would be numerous enough to keep the palace doors, if all others forgot their duty.

I gathered that the new republicanism had not penetrated very deeply into the social fabric of Brittany and strolled forward to watch our entrance into the roadstead. The splendid passage with the great gray forts on either side opened before the ship. To my left the town climbed by gigantic steps from the stone wharves at its foot to the keep and seven towers of the old château that crowned it. The health officer's boat shot toward us to the lusty beat of oars — and Garth sprang past me to leap upon the bulwark, steadying himself by the shrouds while he shouted and waved his hat.

A hat waved from the boat in response. I could see no tricolor ribbons flying from it, but the arm that waved it was clothed in green. A green coat showed among the uniforms at the stern. Twenty strokes more, and the boat swung round to the foot of our ladder. I looked into a half-dozen upturned faces, but I saw only one, the slant-eyed, beetle-like face of Legardien. He waved a folded paper at Garth. Then his eye caught mine and, rising, he made me a bow as ironically ceremonious as his cramped position in the stern-sheets would permit.

My reason might demonstrate to me that he could and would do nothing to harm me — yet. But that bow made me afraid.

CHAPTER VI

FRONTIN

THAT evening I stood on the wharf at Brest, feeling that I must be the loneliest young man in France. A row between the customs officers and the supercargo of our vessel had delayed the landing of the passengers until near sunset. But now the last of these had disappeared behind a train of porters in the direction of the *Couronne de Bretagne* or some more humble hostelry. Jefferson Garth had swaggered through the gates of the *douane* among the first. And I still waited for the confidential servant whom my uncle had promised to have on hand to meet me.

At least, I comforted myself, I had not been arrested. Whatever Legardien's influence might be able to accomplish in more sophisticated parts of the country, it was evidently not equal to laying an innocent foreigner by the heels in conservative Brittany. But as the long twilight of the European summer began to thicken, it occurred to me that, if I continued to remain in that deserted spot, nothing would be easier for him than to have me knocked down by three or four ruffians and thoroughly searched, together with my luggage, for

that letter. Had I been foolish to decline Garth's offer of a shake-down in his room at the *Couronne de Bretagne* and a seat in his chaise on the morrow? Owing to the arrival of a number of vessels that day, every inn was full, he told me. As for traveling to Paris, the demands of the army had taken half the post-horses in France: not another chaise was to be had for love or money; and the diligence was booked up ten days ahead.

He spoke with so sincere a desire to be of service to a fellow-countryman — he had come back all the way from the hotel for the purpose — that, in spite of his irritating air of pompous patronage, I felt ashamed of the seeming churlishness of my refusal. But to accept, though I could not tell him so, would have been to travel to Paris in company with my enemy and to expose my every movement to his surveillance from the start. So I had taken refuge in an attitude of wooden obedience. My father's orders were that I should meet my uncle's servant on that dock, I said, and meet him there I would, if I had to wait all night for him. And Garth had finally flounced away in disgust.

But now I began to think that it would have been better to go along with him. In the darkness the lighted windows of the cheap eating-house up the street, the glowing doorway of the sailors' dramshop on the corner, took on the look of watchful eyes. After all, was

it likely that a man of Legardien's perspicacity would leave me unwatched? I thought of the crippled sailor and the agile soft-footed spy who had haunted our stairway in New York that afternoon. What substitutes for them might not now have me under their unseen guard? I wished I had put into my pockets the two excellent English rifled pistols with their superimposed double barrels, which had been my father's parting gift, instead of leaving them at the bottom of my portmanteau. My uneasiness finally grew to the pitch that I was lifting my portmanteau on to my roll of bedding in order to get at them, when light feet running fast down the cobblestone pavement of the hill caused me to turn and grip my walking-stick for action.

It was a small, slight figure of a man that ran up to me and halted, peering up into my face by the light of the dim lantern that burned above the custom-house gate. I saw with wonder that, swiftly as he had come, he was an old man to my way of thinking, fifty at least. His clothes had the plain, dark excellence of a confidential upper-servant, but his gray hair was loose upon his shoulders, limp with wet, and the collar of his coat gleamed moistly where it caught the lantern-light.

"Monsieur is from America?" he asked between the deep breaths of a man who has been running for a long

time but on whom such an exertion has put no great strain.

"Yes," I answered curtly. "I suppose you are the man who should have met me here when I landed, the Marquis de Remberville's man Frontin." For I found myself grown suddenly angry, as one will in such circumstances the moment one's immediate anxieties have been allayed.

"Oh, Monsieur le Comte. Monsieur le Comte," he burst out loudly, "I ask your pardon a thousand times for an old servant whose only fault is a weakness for the bottle. I was here betimes. Indeed I have been waiting ten days, two weeks nearly, and not a drop of anything stronger than the vile *vin ordinaire* passed my lips until last night. Then that devil of a Legardien — Had Monsieur le Comte's vessel but made port yesterday! However, at least I have a room where Monsieur le Comte may sleep. A meal will be ready. . ."

To my annoyance and embarrassment he had gone down on his knees at my side, fondling my hand and kissing it, while he poured out the tale of his faults and excuses in tones that echoed far up the silent street. With my American training I had to resist the impulse to give him a good democratic kick, remembering that the heir to the marquise of Remberville bore the cour-

tesy title of Comte of Parois and that to this old servitor I was doubtless the incarnate hope of all to which he had given a lifetime of devotion.

"Let us be off at once then," I cut him short. "No. Let me have that. Take the portmanteau, if you will." For he had begun to load himself with the roll of bedding. But he would not hear of such an arrangement. He was strong and hale, he protested. Had I not seen how he could run? All the way from the *Couronne de Bretagne* he had come like that. I checked him at the name of the inn:

"Monsieur Legardien is staying there, is he not?"

"But yes, your excellency. And if he got me drunk, it was he that had me sobered up when he heard that you had landed."

"Well, there's no occasion to tell the whole street about it," I remarked drily. For again his high voice had gone echoing between the dark houses.

He stooped and with an expert twist of arm and back swung the bedding-roll to his shoulders. But he whispered sharply as he did so:

"No, excellency, but there is good reason to let certain persons think I am still as great a fool as they take me for."

Bent nearly double under his load, he set off up the street at a pace that twice forced me to mend my own. I gripped my walking-stick, watching every dark nook

and shadowy alley-mouth and sending frequent glances behind us. Two men came out of the eating-place, when we had gone by it, and one from the dramshop. But if they were following us, they had orders to do no more than keep us under observation, and we reached the *Couronne de Bretagne* without the slightest incident.

The great stone-flagged ordinary of the inn was almost empty at that hour. Only a poor curé in a threadbare cassock was making a late supper of bread and onions and thin, watered wine at a table in one corner, while Legardien and Garth, a half-dozen empty wine-bottles and a flask of brandy on the table between them, were evidently celebrating the latter's arrival in France. Garth's loud voice filled the room as we entered. Weaving to and fro on unsteady legs, he indicated the priest with flappings of his napkin.

"There's one of them now," he hiccupped. "There's one of those black animals, as your great — your great whassizname — called them. Thought you told me you'd got rid of all such black animals. Shoo, black animal. Shoo!"

The priest's mild gaze passed over him as it might have passed over a barking cur. But madame, the proprietress, at her high desk near the pantry door made a sign to the waiter, who immediately went out.

"Monsieur, the military man," she said in clear, quiet

tones, "one does not speak so to the clergy in France, at least not in Brittany, even yet."

Legardien was already on his feet, and he hailed our appearance in manifest delight at so welcome a diversion.

"If it isn't Monsieur Mirecourt and the pink rabbit!" he cried. "Well, rabbit, so you found your cabbage, drunk as you were. But, *mon dieu*, what a slovenly job they made of sobering you up! I bade them souse your head, and you are drenched to the waist."

By this time Garth had reeled up to me, splashing wine from a glass in his waving hand.

"Drink, Citizen Mirecourt," he exhorted. "Drink confushn kings — Confushn Louis XVI 'n 'tic'lar."

"Peace, you fool, peace!" Legardien whispered hoarsely. "Do you want your tongue slit by the hangman?"

"Tongue slit? Ain't we in France? Ain't France free country now?" Garth demanded, turning upon him indignantly.

"You're in Brittany, you kind of an idiot. Save your enthusiasm for Paris," Legardien flung at him.

Garth's seditious speech had been made in English, but, whether the waiters in that inn frequented by travelers understood it or not, Legardien's French remonstrances must have made clear its meaning to them. Two, who looked as if they would have been more at

home on the deck of a fishing smack than in a *salle-à-manger*, had followed the first waiter back into the room and now closed so menacingly around our little group that Garth allowed himself to be led back to his table where he sat down like a sullen little boy. Frontin made for the stairs, and I after him. But before we were out of sight Legardien called to him in tones of malicious raillery:

“Listen, rabbit. I hear two places have been given up in the diligence that leaves one week from tomorrow. Better snap them up lively. Your *ci-devant* marquis might be angry if you’re *much* later.”

Frontin made no reply, unless his attitude of complete dejection could be called one: his slight form drooped so suddenly under my luggage; his feet dragged so heavily from step to step—until we were hidden from below. Then, as we mounted through the dimness to the topmost floor, I observed that he was leaving me behind him. Inside my attic room it was as if he cast off twenty years of age as he dropped my bedding-roll on the bedstead. He whisked the covers from the dishes that stood ready on the ramshackle table, drew the cork from a bottle of claret, handed me my napkin with a flourish.

Now that I had light and leisure to examine his face I did so attentively. Smooth and pink, with eyes like bright beads, and a chin that receded almost to the

Adam's apple, it fully justified Legardien's nickname of the pink rabbit. The lines which time had graven upon it gave it the look of absolute imbecility, as he bustled about with a sort of fatuous satisfaction in the details of serving my meal. Small wonder, I thought, that he had failed to secure transportation to Paris. How my uncle could have chosen such an obvious simpleton for such an errand I could not understand.

"Monsieur le Comte's misgivings are easily understood," he said suddenly, as if I had spoken my thoughts. "But unless I had made that green beast think he had got me dead drunk this morning he would never have left me unwatched long enough to send Monsieur le Comte's vehicle the proper orders for tomorrow."

"Then you have engaged a vehicle?" I cried in delight.

"Alas, no, excellency," he answered loudly. He tiptoed swiftly to the door, flung it open and looked out. "In fact a chaise will be awaiting us a mile outside the gate at sunrise," he went on. "It has not occurred to the Citizen Aristide to go behind the names in which chaises have been engaged."

"Splendid!" I exclaimed.

"If Monsieur le Comte will not object to rising at dawn and walking so far. It is desirable to get as much of a start on the creature as possible, and by this means

I hope for as much as twelve hours. He believes us to be hopelessly stuck here, his companion, the American officer, will not be sober before noon, and it may well be late afternoon tomorrow before it occurs to him that he has not seen either of us about."

I dismissed him shortly after that, telling him that I would do my own unpacking. Between the anxieties of the day and the fatigue of disembarkation I was dog-tired, and I wished to get at my pistols and place them where they would be handy without his knowing that I had done so. For 'trot upon his revelation of his secret efficiency had come a fresh suspicion. If he were not the incapable I had taken him for, might he not be Legardien's agent, set to lure me into just the position where I could be most conveniently attacked? Dawn in the empty streets or on the open highroad would suit such a purpose to perfection.

Seated on the edge of my bed I drew the charges from my weapons, reloaded them, inspected the flints and primed them anew. Then, creeping to the door, I lifted the latch and opened it suddenly. The finger of candle-light lanced the darkness and broadened over a heap of rumpled cloth that heaved and fell away as Frontin sat up among the folds of his cloak, a sly smile in his bright little eyes and one hand at his lips in caution. Faintly from below came a burst of song in the voice of Garth, which was instantly drowned in a lively

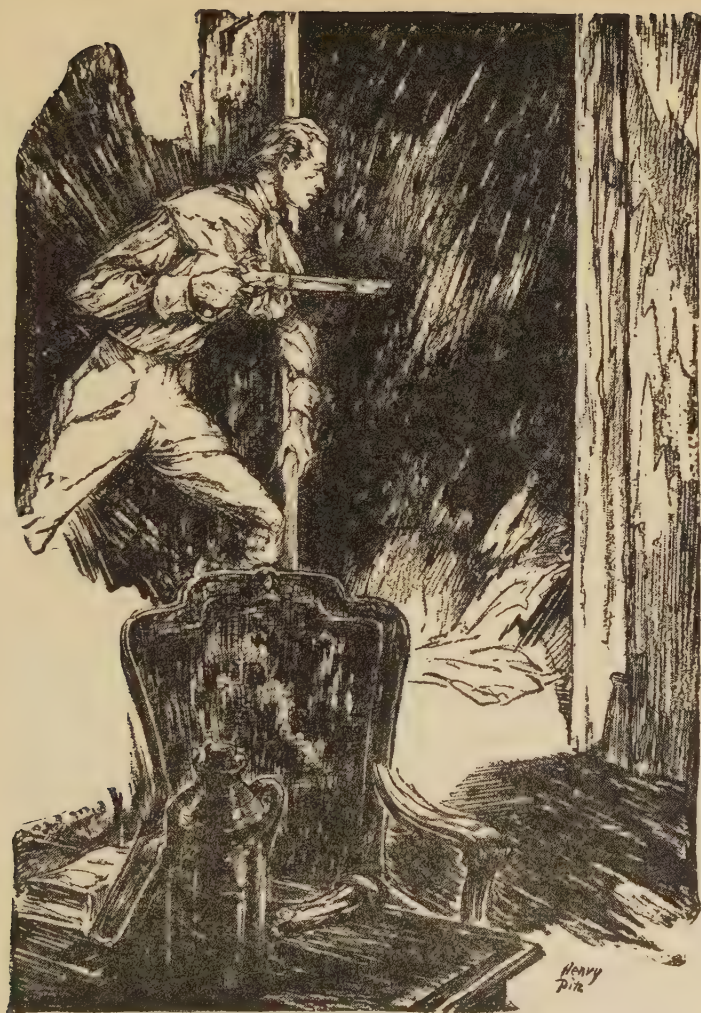
altercation. The champion of liberty seemed to be making a point of his right to sit up and drink as long as he pleased. I nodded to Frontin and closed the door. Was he there as my guard or my jailer? Well, time would answer that. And with the fatalism of fatigue I shoved my pistols under my pillow, threw myself upon my bed, fully dressed as I was, and fell asleep instantly.

Frontin's hand over my nose and mouth, lest I should speak aloud before I was fully awake, brought me back to consciousness. The room was full of the strong light of the summer dawn. He had a breakfast ready for me in the shape of a cup of milk, stiffly laced with brandy, and the heel of a loaf of bread; and while I ate and drank, he rolled my bedding, first handing me my pistols, which I had quite forgotten. If he felt that their being where he found them showed any want of confidence in him, he gave no sign of it.

"I anticipate no trouble, but Monsieur le Comte will do well to keep these where he can easily reach them."

I hope I had the grace to blush for my suspicions. I blush now with shame, when I think of the youthful lordliness with which I accepted his self-forgetting devotion, of what those menial duties must have cost a man of his tastes and training, and remember that I could never so much as thank him for all he did for me.

A hint of sunrise was already in the streets when we



CREEPING TO THE DOOR I OPENED IT SUDDENLY

tiptoed out. Everything was so still that we heard the metallic thud of grounded arms as the guard relieved the sentinels away down at the naval dockyard. We saw no one until we reached the barrier. There the last of the stream of market carts was making its spasmodic progress past the *octroi*, while our papers let us through and past the guard-house in the opposite direction. From the roadside rose the smells of dewy earth which are so sweet to one's nostrils after weeks at sea. Birds chirped from the hedges, and from a meadow below us a skylark rose on a rocket of song.

The first sunbeam lighted the tops of the long, double file of roadside trees ahead, moved downward till it flashed on the yellow panels of a waiting chaise, and touched the blue jacket and jack-boots of the postilion. A wave from Frontin brought him up to us at a smart trot. Into the rumble went my bedding, my portmanteau after me on to the little front seat inside. Frontin hesitated perfunctorily at the door.

"Monsieur le —" He checked himself. "The citizen will permit me to ride with him? There are certain matters it is desirable for me to acquaint him with."

He called to the postboy at my nod of acquiescence:

"The half of a gold *louis* for you, my lad, if we make the first stage in an hour."

He leaped in, slamming the door behind him, as the postboy's whip cracked and cracked again. The hardy

little horses sprang forward. I was off for Paris indeed now, with Legardien left behind me.

"First," I said, "tell me who that rascal is and how he comes to know what my uncle —" I paused and hesitated. After all, I mustn't assume that Frontin knew the full purpose of my coming to France. "How does he know so much as he seems to know about my uncle's affairs?"

Frontin smiled.

"He knows as much — or very nearly as much — as I do," he replied. "It is quite simple. Monsieur le Marquis was imposed upon grossly. I was not then in his service, but when your uncle became a member of the Constituent Assembly, I understand, he thought he might profit by having a smart young secretary who could keep him in touch with the extreme revolutionary spirit in Paris. Legardien, who had already failed in the law schools and as a journalist, applied for the job, and for almost two years thereafter made a very pretty living by pretending to betray his republican friends to your uncle, while actually he was supplying the former with all the information he could gather in the royalist camp. It was I, indeed, who had the good luck to expose him, or rather to bring about his exposure and discharge — for he thinks even yet that a blunder of his own was responsible." The little man here indulged in a smile of singularly naïve self-satisfaction but imme-

diately turned grave again. "By that time, however, he had wormed his way into your uncle's confidence so far and understood the details of his private life so thoroughly that, when he heard by mischance that your uncle had written to your father, he was able to make a shrewd guess at the purpose of the letter and acted accordingly. We heard of his departure from France too late to prevent it or to warn you. It was a great relief to Monsieur le Marquis to receive your father's letter telling him how completely the wretch had been frustrated."

"You know my uncle's full purpose in sending for me?" I asked bluntly.

"The little matter of the legacy left by a certain old prior of the Templars?" He nodded, his bright eyes twinkling. "I am to go with you on that quest."

"Good!" I exclaimed and, evidently to his surprise, insisted on shaking hands on it. For all my doubts of him had vanished with the morning, and his every glance and movement increased my confidence in him.

We drove until midnight, stopping only to change horses — nineteen hours of bowling along the smooth levels, toiling up the long hills to the crack of the post-boy's whip, rattling down them at a trot that made me ache for the horses' knees. The long shadows of the trees that barred the road from east to west shrank to dark pools of shade beneath their branches, and

stretched again, barring it from west to east. Thick dust from every passing vehicle choked us: we panted in the hot breathlessness of the towns; for that August in France was phenomenal for heat and drought. When we ate, the food was handed in to us through the carriage window. But at every stop Frontin was out, feeling of the hubs for signs of heating. Twice he had the wheels off and the spindles smeared thickly with fresh grease, and at every stage he renewed his promises of reward for speed.

It was not the fear of Legardien alone which drove us onward, he explained, when I expressed my wonder at his haste, since in all probability the wretch was not yet aware of our departure. It was the thought of what might occur at any moment in Paris — of what might have occurred there already. And he described the city as he had left it — like some superheated room crammed with gunpowder, that any spark might flash into terrific explosion. With the Austrian and Prussian troops ready to invade the country, their commander, the Duke of Brunswick, had issued a proclamation ordering the French people to submit to the absolute rule of their king and threatening Paris with fire and slaughter if harm should come to any of the royal family. And men said that was the queen's doing, that the king — good man though he might be — was absolutely untrustworthy under her influence, that he

plotted with her for the defeat of France and the ruin of the new freedom, and that his palace of the Tuileries was no better than an Austrian outpost in the heart of his country's capital.

By law the king had been deprived of his guards, but in fact they were still close at hand, many of them quartered in private houses near the palace, the splendid Swiss in their barracks at Brueil only ten miles out on an excellent road; and hundreds of nobles, trained to arms, waited only for the first sign of an attack to rush to the defense of their sovereign. On the other side, and more and more, as the days went by, there crowded into Paris people to whom the nation meant something apart from the person of the king. Five hundred men from Marseilles, braving the heat of the Midi in July, had marched across France in twenty-eight days without one man dropping by the way. Frontin had left Paris for Brest before they arrived, but a letter from a friend had told him of them, how they had come swinging up the street to the meeting-place of the Assembly in the Riding School, singing that splendid new song of theirs, and how much more terrible than a mob they were in their perfect discipline and order.

How long such jarring elements could mingle before friction caused an upheaval, none could say. Every night parties of royalists went about the streets, shouting songs that threatened the revolutionists with the Duke

of Brunswick's vengeance, and there were innumerable street-fights. Such were the conditions in which my uncle awaited my coming, but not openly, in his town house. The mob had stoned the windows out of that. He had a refuge in a garret two doors away which afforded additional means of access and egress by way of the leads, and there he lingered for two things: my arrival and the expected attack on the palace, in the defense of which he had sworn to have a hand.

Despite his broken health he could still be useful with a musket or blunderbuss at a window overlooking the courtyard, Frontin pointed out, when I expressed my surprise at this. But when I hoped aloud that I might arrive in time to be allowed to bear my part in the defense of my father's former sovereign and fight under the flag which had waved over my ancestors on so many battlefields, he shook his head. I owed my life to the country that had given me birth, he reminded me, and my duty in France lay in getting into Paris and out again on my quest as soon as an interview with my uncle made that possible.

"But suppose we are too late? Suppose my uncle has already joined the garrison of the palace, and we have to go there to find him. He would not — he could not expect me to sneak out under the shadow of impending danger, could he?" I suggested hopefully.

"I'm sure I hope he would, Monsieur le Comte," Frontin replied respectfully. "It will be a deplorable business enough for those whose duty compels them to take a part in it."

CHAPTER VII

IN THE KING'S PLEASURE GARDEN

AS WE rolled through those peaceful country landscapes, it was hard to credit all this talk of a nation in ferment and a capital heated to the point of combustion by hatreds and suspicions centuries old. Men were working on the land, tending their cattle; women swept their houses and leaned from kitchen windows to watch us pass. Trees and ripening grain drooped and seemed to drowse under the fiery sun, and fields and wooded hillsides dreamed in the hot starlight. Even Frontin's anxiety was lulled and gave place to milder thoughts.

"Monsieur, your father will have spoken to you of your uncle's ward, Mademoiselle la Princesse de Renois, I think?" he asked. "I have a message for you from her."

"For me! You have seen her lately? She is not in Paris, I hope," I exclaimed, adding lamely, "in a place so full of danger, I mean, of course."

"No," he returned quietly. "She continues to reside at her little château at Vraincourt, near Clermont-en-Argonne. A month ago your uncle sent me thither

to urge her to remove to some place less exposed to the dangers of foreign invasion. He suggested Orleans as a safe place and one where you might later have the pleasure of paying your respects to her. I am sorry to say that she declined to obey his wishes. But she bade me tell you that if you cared for hunting the fox English fashion, she could promise you excellent sport and a good mount, unless the Germans should burn her house and steal her horses."

"But she oughtn't to be allowed to stay there—a young girl with nobody but an old-maid aunt to protect her—in the path of an invading army," I exclaimed in indignation.

"We must see if you cannot persuade her to leave," he replied. "We can easily take Vraincourt on our way back from Remberville."

"I don't see how I could persuade her, if she disregards her guardian's wishes," I returned crossly, and I felt like adding that I didn't intend to try. If this self-willed chit was determined to expose herself to the dangers of foreign invasion, it was none of my affair. In truth my uncle's proposal to marry her to me out of hand had given me a distaste for the thought of her. The signs of excitement in the towns, of a tension that became greater as Paris drew nearer, I welcomed as a distraction from it.

People came to the doorways or ran into the street at

the rattle of our wheels, only to turn back, indifferent, when they saw that we came from the west. Where some old Gothic church threw its shadow on a public square, National Guards would be drilling under the contemptuous eye of some one-legged veteran. At the café tables beneath the chestnut trees each copy of a Paris newspaper was the center of an attentive group, and the notice-board at the *mairie* had its knot of readers about it. Officials girt with tricolor scarfs became less and less perfunctory in their examination of our papers, until at length toward sunset of the second day one pounced upon my name like a wise old cat upon a mouse of flagrant boldness.

"Mirecourt! That is indeed a name for a man to choose to travel by in France in these days. Any kin to the *ci-devant* and justly execrated Marquis de Remberville?"

I stared as if this outburst had been too much for a foreigner's knowledge of the language, and Frontin cut in to save me:

"But if the citizen officer would be good enough to read the passport!" he cried indignantly, his thin finger stabbing at the document. "Born in America — By birth a citizen of the young republic across the sea! The citizen officer might save himself the putting of absurd questions, if he would read the passport first."

"Let the foreign traveler shout *Vive la Nation* then,"

the zealous ass insisted. I did so, feeling like a great fool but careful to make the words sound as much as possible like Garth's pronunciation of them, and we were allowed to go on.

About ten o'clock that night, as we were descending a steep hill with the drag screaming and shooting sparks under the off rear wheel and the chaise lamps shining on the curved rumps of the horses, a tire came off, bounding like a child's hoop in the lamplight, and disappeared down the road ahead. To recover it, rouse a village smith and persuade him to blow up his fire and put it on again, consumed I know not how many hours. I slept and was only half aware of the steady clop-clop of the horses and the monotonous lullaby of the creaking vehicle, when we started on again, though I remember Frontin deploring the fact that this delay would cost us the few hours rest he had intended to give us at Sèvres. His fingers tapping sharply on my knee wakened me a good while after. The chaise was motionless, the horses panting as if from the ascent of a long hill.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "Paris! The game begins there." And he pointed across the lowered glass of the door.

It was the very peep of day, for the stars had begun to pale; but below us and still several miles off the great city threw on the sky the glare of a hundred-thousand

lighted windows, as if the hour had been mid-evening of a festal-night. Then above the creak of the chaise and the stamp and jingle of the horses there struck my ear a steady humming note — the voices, blended by distance into one, of a thousand bells. The postboy, perched sideways on his saddle, cocked an ear to it.

"Listen, the tocsin, citizens," he called to us. "They are beginning down there."

"Yes," Frontin answered shortly. "Swing to the north when you can — barrier at the Étoile. The hotel of this American lies north of the Palais Royal, and we cannot risk having to pass through the fighting. If I can place you in your uncle's attic by morning Legardien will never trace you in this tumult," he added.

Instinctively we both glanced back as he spoke. Down the long hill behind the one on which we stood a pair of chaise-lamps was sliding with bounds and gyrations that bore witness to the reckless speed of the driving. Frontin called to our postilion:

"Another *louis d'or* if you get the last stretch of speed out of those animals in the next hour!"

We made a turn on two wheels, thundered down a rutted lane between high garden-walls, grazed the corner, rounded a clump of trees. A broad waterside meadow stretched before us, half-hidden in white mist, and soft sand muffled the horses' hoofbeats until five minutes later they rang on a metalled highroad. The

shops and housefronts of a sleeping town flung back our clatter. Then the arches of a bridge were echoing under us, and the reflections of our lamps raced us on either side in smooth, dark water. But just as we left the hard road again and dashed into the obscurity of a wood, the lights of the pursuing chaise came into view.

Never have I been able to trace out exactly our course that early morning. We must have cut across by a network of lanes and neighborhood roads from the vicinity of Sèvres to St. Cloud and the bridge. For the wood that now enfolded us was the Bois de Boulogne, since we emerged from it, still at the gallop, on the Rouen road. Dawn had broken by this time, truly — as one said who saw it from the windows of the beleaguered Tuileries — “an awful dawn.” It was as if the flames of a great conflagration spread across the sky. In its light the long hill before us shone red, and the string of market carts that stretched up to the Étoile, waiting their turn to pass the barrier, threw back its glare from iron tires and canvas covers wet with dew. The faces of the drivers glowed with it as we sped up the long line.

Frontin had been scribbling on a bit of paper held on his knee. Now he called to the postilion to stop, sprang out with a word to me to follow him, and thrust the note and a piece of gold into the fellow's hand.

“Keep on around to the barrier at the end of the Rue

de la Roche," he directed. "Leave the luggage at the *Hotel of the Three Crowns*. Another *louis d'or* will be given you there for that note you carry. Now off with you. Don't let that fellow behind catch up with you."

The empty chaise sped down the long avenue to the left. But, swiftly as it went, Frontin was swifter in dragging me between two vehicles that blocked the barrier gate. Already a chaise with horses at the gallop and lamps burning wanly in the red daylight was tearing up the hill. Evidently its occupants had sighted ours, for it wasted not a moment in swinging northward in pursuit; and we had the satisfaction of seeing Legardien's green coat at one window, Garth's blue one at the other, as they strained out over the lowered glasses for a glimpse of the escaping vehicle.

"And now," said Frontin quietly, when the production of some sort of special pass had allowed us to slip through the spiked gate and we stood with the multiple rows of trees of the Champs Élysées falling away before us to the Place Louis XV, "now for breakfast, if such a commonplace want can be satisfied on a day when the whole world has gone mad. Your uncle will have gone to the palace undoubtedly. So we can only await the end of this affair."

Mad the city seemed, or like some city in a night-

mare. No artisans trudged to work with tools and smoking pipe. No fiacres rattled, no coaches rumbled home with their load of returning revelers. Before the shops in the side-streets the shutters were up. The café tables and chairs remained stacked beneath the trees, while waiters and apprentices stood in low-voiced groups under the eyes of their employers and, like them, stared eastward where the red disk of the sun shot up above the gardens of the Tuileries. And over all the bells sent forth their constant clangor.

At last we found a place where business sense prevailed over the general apprehension. We even persuaded the proprietor to add fruit and eggs to the meal. But I began to chafe at our inactivity, when we continued to linger after we had eaten. Frontin, however, was not to be moved. His orders covered just such circumstances as these, he said. We were to wait until the attack had failed — as fail it must.

“Why must it?” I challenged. An argument would at least serve to pass the time.

Because the mob, inflamed by their insensate leaders, would dash themselves to pieces against the solid ranks of the disciplined Swiss bodyguard, he explained. The fire of the nobles from the palace windows would mow them down in the courtyard, supposing that they should get so far. A bayonet charge would sweep away the

remnant, and the world would go back to its proper business in an air cleared of the thickening vapors of the past few months as by a thunder-storm.

A crash of musketry punctuated the close of this optimistic prediction. Together we dashed out into the roadway, where scores of people down the long slope were straining their eyes toward the palace. A cloud of powder-smoke climbed slowly above the tree-tops of the palace gardens. The firing settled into a steady roll which was broken now and again by the boom of a cannon. The Place Louis XV was thick with gazers, though there the railings and the trees above them hid even the smoke of battle. But, as if we had been drawn thither by some unconscious fascination, we presently found ourselves among the throng. The noise of the fusillade grew louder, rising to a furious crescendo, and ended in a crash.

Frontin turned to me, his rabbit face flaming with excitement.

"That's it," he cried. "That's the Swiss volley before they charge. They are clearing them out with the bayonet now. I didn't follow the wars in Germany without learning to understand the sounds of a battle. Come with me. Run!"

We dashed across the square and through an open wicket in the high iron railings.

"The attack is from the other side. We shall reach

Monsieur le Marquis and be off again while Legardien is still watching for us in the Rue Saint Honoré," Frontin rejoiced, as we ran along a broad gravel path between the trees and a kind of inner wall on the northern side of the garden. But before we reached its end the firing burst out in front of us with redoubled fury. Close as we were now, the detonations of the cannon shook the ground under our feet. We could hear the thud of the cannon-shot against the solid masonry, the crash of broken glass as the great casements fell from their hinges, riddled by musket-balls. And over all else, as if it bore all other sounds along with it, rose the clamor of the mob. They had swept around the palace at both ends, by the Rue Dauphin and the gates at the head of the Pont Royal, and in another moment they flooded into the garden before our eyes.

Muskets began to crack from the wall to our left, from away to our right. Bullets sang overhead. Frontin dropped to the ground and pulled me down beside him. For now puffs of smoke sprang out from the palace windows facing us. From the upper windows of the houses commanding the gardens behind us opened an answering fire. Then I heard Frontin groan aloud.

"My God, the day is lost. The Swiss are retiring."

I caught a gleam of red and white against the shadowed gray of the granite walls, and understood. It

was the red coats and white breeches of the Swiss guards as they filed out of the great western doors. With the precision of machinery they formed a hollow square under an ever increasing fire from both sides, leveled their muskets, drew their triggers as one man in two crashing volleys, and began the hopeless attempt to obey their king's last order, to return to their barracks at Rueil.

No one who saw it can ever have forgotten the majesty of that mass of tall red-coated men whom discipline cemented into a moving fortress of human flesh. It left a red trail of figures, motionless or writhing amid the gravel and trampled flower-beds of the parterre, but the red walls showed no gaps through the swirling smoke that cloaked them, so swiftly did they close. Their covering volleys spoke with the same single burst of sound. But now in front and rear, as well as on both flanks, their enemies swarmed round them. The tree-lined alleys flamed with musketry. The wall behind us popped and smoked. A wave of mixed humanity, ragged men, sweating and wild of countenance, half-naked women, armed with pikes and butchers' cleavers, and soldiers in the uniform of the National Guard, rolled over us as we lay, rolled back before the blast of a volley, pitched down, dead or wounded, upon us, and, shoved by a second wave from behind, dashed forward again.



Frontin, a bloody pike in his hand, dragged me to my feet. He thrust a musket at me. For a moment I thought he had gone mad, until I realized that with our respectable appearance we were mere dead men in that mob unless we acted as if our purpose was one with theirs. A rush of wild figures went westward to keep

pace with the Swiss retreat, and we went with it. But at last that red square had begun to crumble. A corner cracked, half fell to earth, half burst away to where the trees touched the garden wall. A side bulged, split wide-open. The ordered volleys had ceased. You saw men with bulging eyes pitch their muskets to the shoulder, fire and begin to reload as they went along. The cadenced step degenerated into the shambling of a herd, and behind the principal mass, which grew smaller from moment to moment, were scattered little groups, each with its core of two, three — as many as a half-dozen — powdered-headed, red-coated figures that sank, rose screaming, and fell under a storm of sabrecuts, pike-thrusts and slashing knives.

Frontin was pulling at my elbow.

“Fire your musket. Shoot into the air, if you will, but shoot. This pike speaks for itself, but you may need the evidence of an empty gun.”

I did as he bade me, firing low past the remnant of the guards' formation with the earnest hope that the bullet might find a billet in one of the mob that was attacking them from the southern side. Then at a trot, as if we were upon some important mission, I followed him by the way we had come. Behind us rose the wild yell that greeted the breaking of the body-guard's last organized resistance. Pandemonium followed: savage shouts, cries for mercy in the German

tongue, screamings; the spurt of gravel under flying feet, crunch of sabre and bayonet driven home to the socket; swift, furtive steps upon the grass, scrambling and gabbled prayers.

Stunned by these sounds, my eyes glued to Frontin's back in terror of the horrid sights all round me, I followed him mechanically until we had passed the wicket and were threading our way once more through the crowd in the Place Louis XV. The mob was there now. They clustered thick about the basin of a fountain, laughing, pushing each other with arms red to the elbow, thrusting their hot faces deep into the water and slaking their powder-parched throats like beasts. Frontin drove in among them, and I was about to follow, when I found myself face to face with Jefferson Garth.

Not until I bent over the basin of the fountain a few moments later and saw my distorted image in its troubled waters did I understand the look of horror with which he recoiled from me. My hat was gone, my hair, face and linen smeared with the mold of the flower-bed in which I had lain, spotted with the blood of some *sans-culotte* who had fallen beside me.

"You, too!" he screamed in English with gray lips squared like a tragic mask. "My God, you, too!" and turned from me, retching. Legardien, his slant eyes aglow in his white, insect face, grinned across the American's shoulder.

"Our friend seems to have thought one could make an omelette without breaking the eggs. Infectious, isn't it, the lust for liberty?" he added, looking down at the pistols he was reloading and up with a sly smile at my bespattered clothes. "Rare sport! You catch one helpless and hold your pistol to the lower jaw. The result is side-splitting, I assure you."

I thrust him aside with a groan of impotent wrath. He reeled away, laughing, and I, shocked by my reflection in the fountain, scrubbed madly to wash away those dreadful traces even in that polluted stream. When I had done, Frontin led me up the Rue Royal until, in a quiet place well beyond the crossing of the Rue St. Honoré, we could sink into two chairs near the door. He called for brandy but, when we had gulped it neat, we could do no more for a time than sit and stare blankly before us.

In the streets outside, now that the firing had ceased, the commonplace activities of every day began to reappear. After all, men must eat and drink, buy clothing and the means of shelter, though a monarchy end in massacre and the last of its kings take refuge with the assembly that has been too weak to save it. Coaches and carts began to roll again; shops were busy; women at their marketing hardly paused to shrug, when a few streets away shots and yells told that the rabble was hunting some miserable quarry up the alleys.

We had picked up Garth as we went along. Frontin had protested, but I could not leave a fellow-countryman, little as I liked him, to the fate which his strange uniform and foreign-sounding French were sure to bring down upon him in the state in which we found him. Dazed with horror, the unhappy champion of the people had been staggering away like a drunken man from the sight of the triumph of liberty as his intended beneficiaries understood it, and like a docile drunken man he had allowed us to lead him to the café. He downed his brandy at a gulp, drank the second glass which Frontin ordered for him alone, gloomed for a while with unseeing eyes at the opposite wall, and at last broke suddenly into the low talk of ways and means which Frontin and I had begun between ourselves.

"After all," he said, "one cannot blame them. They are only what a thousand years of tyranny have made them."

"Perhaps not," I took him up hotly. "But one can blame the infatuated idealists who let them loose — the men like you, sir, who thought they were angels because they were oppressed and poor."

"At least," he sneered, "I did not purchase my safety by joining in their carnival of slaughter."

"Speak French, for the love of God, and speak low," Frontin whispered. For Garth's voice had resounded

through the room, and more than one of those who had begun to drop in for their mid-day meal had fixed us with glances either curious or actively hostile. But now there came from the street the shuffle of a crowd and the sound of husky singing:

*“ Les Suisses avaient promis
Qu'ils feraient feu sur nos amis.
Mais, comme ils ont sauté,
Comme ils ont tous dansé!
Dansons la Carmagnole. . . ”*

Coaches whipped up to the footway and stopped, their occupants either shrinking back from the windows or scuttling out of them for the shelter of a friendly shop; the bolder of the foot passengers flattened themselves against the walls; and a sorry procession, barefoot, in blood-stained rags, their filthy hair afloat under a hedge of bayonets and pikes, swaggered into view. At their head grinned from a pole a ghastly trophy from which I could not quickly enough snatch my glance away.

Of all the people within our vision but one confronted them squarely. This was a slight young man of middling stature in the uniform of a lieutenant of the French artillery. His fine nose, singularly beautiful and sensitive mouth, and dark eyes sunken, like his cheeks, either from fatigue or too scanty food, made up a countenance that would have been striking at any

time. Now in its grave and slightly contemptuous observation of the rabble it stood out in startling contrast with the propitiatory, grinning faces of the bystanders.

The tatterdemalion mob halted, grounding their dreadful standard before him. Their front ranks hemmed him in. But by craning my neck I could still glimpse the calm gravity of his face. The sorry singing had died out in a storm of questions, threats and demands. In answer to these last he raised his eyes, fixed them steadily on the bedraggled thing that crowned the pole, lifted his hat in salute and in a voice devoid of feeling cried loudly:

"Vive la Nation!"

He replaced his hat on his head, turned and passed out of their circle as deliberately as if he had done nothing more unusual than salute the colors at a Sunday regimental parade. Their ranks opened to let him through, and they swaggered away to the broken-winded strains of their song, while he entered our café and sat at the table next to ours.

Garth rose at his entrance, tossing a coin on the table with a gesture that said plainer than words that he would not be beholden for even a glass of brandy to such as we. He turned his back on us and bowed to the young artilleryman in his best military style.

"Major Jefferson Garth, late of the Army of the

United States of North America, but now commissioned in the French infantry, monsieur," he introduced himself in his barbarous French. "May I beg the honor of your acquaintance as a brother-in-arms, and ask your opinion of this morning's happenings?"

The other rose and bowed with equal formality.

"I am Lieutenant Bonaparte," he said in a musical voice with a strong Italian twist to its accent. "I am honored by your acquaintance, monsieur."

Frontin stood up. We must be going. And so I had my first and last glimpse of the man who in less than eight years was to rule all France, and half Europe soon after, from that palace which I had just seen taken from its ancient owners. That I should have left that place without a second glance at him seems strange now. But my head was full enough of other matters just then, even had the spirit of prophecy stood at my elbow. Frontin was going to the palace to try to find my uncle or — what seemed more likely — my uncle's body. For by all we could hear the slaughter among the defenders had been frightful. He would leave me meanwhile at the house of Mr. Gouverneur Morris, the American minister to the French Court.

After that what would become of me, I wondered. For, if my uncle had been killed, the secret of the Prior's treasure had died with him, and all my fine hopes as well.



CHAPTER VIII

THE FUNERAL OF A MONARCHY

I WAS the bearer of two letters to the American minister: one from my father, who had known Mr. Morris slightly in his younger days about New York, and one from my father's old commander, General Knox, at that time Secretary of War, saying that any service to the son of a former comrade would be a favor to him. But even so I cannot but wonder at the cordiality of my reception in the circumstances. The legation was like a house in which a funeral was being held. Through a door that stood half-open I glimpsed a room filled with people. Cakes and wine stood on the table, and about it pale gentlemen talked in groups, with lowered voices and carefully moderated gestures; ladies and a quite old man or two filled the chairs about the walls; and over the whole scene lay that air one feels in a roomful of relatives and friends who await the entrance of the clergyman and the beginning of the obsequies.

Some of the highest and noblest in France had sought refuge there, as I discovered when, Mr. Morris's valet having helped me to a more decent appearance, I was

led about the room and presented to them. The old Comte d'Estaing, who commanded the French fleet that made the capture of Yorktown possible, as you may remember, was among them. But what impressed me more than their great names, or even the grave courtesy with which they received me — the older ones recalling my father with evident pleasure, the younger regretting that I should see the land of his birth in such confusion — was the perfect self-mastery with which they ignored the danger of ruin and death that hung over them. Many of them had reached even this precarious refuge at the risk of their lives; hardly one but had husband, father, brother, or son in the garrison of the palace or on the frontier, as much in danger from his own mutinous troops as from the enemy; and each of them was well aware that only the flag of a feeble new republic across the sea and the cold courage of that republic's representative stood between them and massacre.

But they knew that man. For three years before his appointment as our minister he had lived among them, winning their friendship and confidence by his courtesy and wit, his wisdom and clear insight into the troubles of their distracted country. He moved among them now, as calm as they and much more cool, though he was doomed to the same death, should he fail by his mere courage and address to save them from the mob.

He had his country's interest and his official honor to guard as well, yet I saw him sympathetic without patronage, compassionate without gloom, and gravely cheerful. I believe, indeed, that he was profoundly elated by the danger he faced, the risk he ran, the honor that accrued to his country through him in this saving of France from herself and balking of its prey the bloody-minded spirit of revolt which he hated with heart and soul.

Dressed with scrupulous care and quiet elegance, his hair meticulously powdered and tied, a plain walking-sword at his hip, he moved about with so gracious a dignity that one never thought of the wooden leg which replaced that which a carriage accident had cost him years before. He withdrew at his secretary's nod to face some new and always dangerous complication, presided at the head of his long table at supper, planned the slipping away of his guests to some more permanent asylum when the late darkness fell, with a measured urbanity equal to that of any *grand seigneur* among them. Me he welcomed particularly, I think, as a diversion for them. What I had to tell, evil as my tidings were, was better than the garbled reports which his messengers had been able to gather in the streets up to the time of my arrival. Belated refugees brought news of the sack of the palace and that the royal family still remained in the reporters' box in the Assembly

hall, whither they had fled before the attack on the palace began, while the mob filed through with maudlin rantings and trophies of their victory. But I continued to be the lion of the occasion, as the only eyewitness there, and was still telling my story when the weary footman whispered in my ear that my servant was waiting below.

Frontin was waiting at the bottom of the stairs, but the footman stared at him in perplexity and then turned to me.

"Is this your servant, monsieur? He is not the man who asked for you. That man went out, saying he had just remembered an errand but would be back before you could come down."

I asked what sort of man. But the footman could not say, except that he seemed quite a decent servant sort. One thing he did remember on being pressed, however. The fellow had stepped across the tiled floor without making a sound, as if his shoes were soled with felt. My thoughts flew back to that first eventful May day in New York and the noiseless flight of the listener on our landing. But Frontin only shrugged. Legardien would be sure to make inquiry for me here as soon as he recovered from the excitement of the massacre in the palace gardens sufficiently to realize that he had lost track of me, he said. Doubtless his watcher was still in the street outside but, if we went at once, we

might yet escape unobserved by the alleys at the back.

He told me the outcome of his mission, while the servant was leading us through the deserted kitchen and a little garden to a gate in the high wall. My uncle was alive. A bullet through the chest, but so high that there was a chance that the lung had not been touched, and another, which had plowed the scalp, had stretched him on the floor, apparently dead, early in the fight. There Frontin had found him beneath a heap of slain and, as one of the dead, had managed to carry him in a coach to his lodgings. He had recovered consciousness and, the moment he recognized Frontin, had demanded that I be brought to him immediately in spite of his doctor's protests. The rest must wait, Frontin broke off as the footman drew the bolts; and at a pace like that at which he dashed down the hill at Brest he plunged into the hot darkness of the alley.

How at such speed he found his way I could not guess. We wound through a labyrinth of stables and garden walls, threaded a half-depopulated slum where the decaying houses had spilled their ruined chimneys in the narrow street, turned aside when twice the glare of torches showed the wild faces of plunderers and once a couple of lanterns flashed on the bayonets of a uniformed patrol. Only at sight of a great square lantern hanging by ropes above the intersection of our route by a broad street of shops did he pause.

The street was empty at that hour, but crossing it would expose us to the chance of a challenge by any passing patrol. I saw Frontin gather himself for a dash across and was doing likewise, when a woman's scream, a shout and the clash of steel broke the stillness. Frontin grasped at my sleeve and missed, as I leaped past him. It was a foolish thing I did, of course. By it I threw not only my life and liberty but my father's fate into the hazard as well. But, if I had had time to think of that, I do not believe I could have acted otherwise, nor could you.

A savage little scene met my eyes as I sprang round the corner. Two women were struggling in the grip of a couple of bare-armed, bare-chested ruffians who strove to tear their ear-rings from their ears, while a third, sabre to sabre, stood off the furious attack of Jefferson Garth. Garth tricked his man with a feint and cut him down. But the others, dropping their prey, caught up, the one a sabre, the other a bayoneted musket, and attacked him. But I was upon them in two strides more. My fist caught the man with the sabre on the side of the face before he even saw me. It was a glancing blow, but he fled with a yell of fright. Garth at the same moment sent the other flying, slashed across the face; and we five stood there, I too breathless to speak, Frontin pulling at my sleeve and muttering that we must be off at once, the two women in each other's

arms, while Garth stammered reassurances to them in his bad French and gazed at the younger of them as if he could never gaze enough.

She was a singularly pretty girl of eighteen or nineteen. Her hat had been knocked off, her hair tumbled down, and the bright golden tresses falling around her face made a charming contrast with her dark eyes and the rich color with which the sense of danger and the sight of her rescuer suffused it. For, indeed, Garth's tall, full figure and robust good looks never showed to better advantage than as he stood there in the light of that street-lamp. Flushed with triumph and admiration, his face, like hers, shone with something finer, something beautiful, that held my gaze fascinated even while it made me feel that I ought to turn my eyes away.

A sharp exclamation from Frontin brought me to myself. A gush of torchlight with dark figures and weapons under it flooded out of a cross-street not a hundred yards away. The older woman cried out for us to be quick; their own door was just in front of us. In a moment we were all crowding down dark steps. Her key grated, and we stood in a hard-breathing little group behind the barred door of a low basement room where a night-light showed the wire frames, bandboxes, and litter of silken scraps and artificial flowers of a milliner's work-room. Frontin sprang for the light and

blew it out, but too late. Some rioter in the group now gathered around the body of Garth's first antagonist had spied its feeble gleam. Pike and musket-butt thudded and rattled on the door, and there arose such a chorus of commands to open, threats and curses mingled with a mere ravening of cries and yells that the blood stopped at my heart.

"Pistols, now," said Frontin's quiet voice behind me; and there came the flash of flint and steel as he began to set the lamp aglow again. The older woman dragged at a heavy table to brace the shaking fabric of the door. The younger, clutched to his side with one arm, clung round Garth's neck, while with sabre poised to thrust he watched the cracking panels. Then, as the flame leaped up, he turned his head aside and met her lips in a kiss which, I dare say, he thought was the last he should have of them or any others in this world.

Outside a single voice arose, dominating the tumult, stilling it, and bidding us open in the name of the people. Garth answered it with a joyful shout.

"Legardien, it's Garth. Tell them—I have two ladies here—two poor milliner's assistants," he corrected himself at the low prompting of the girl at his side. "That dead villain out there would have torn their poor jewelry out of their ears, had I not killed him."

We heard Legardien haranguing his followers, trim-

ming the tale to their taste — the American officer's first night in Paris — a couple of grisettes — The rabble sniggered and guffawed. A shout of alarm checked this amusement. There was a scampering of bare and slipshod feet, and Legardien, left alone, was rapping frantically with his knuckles on the door.

"Let me in, Garth. Let me in quickly," he implored. "It's a patrol of the National Guards. They shoot on sight where they suspect plundering."

But as Garth drew the bolts Frontin snatched up the lamp and called to me. Behind him I sprang through the inner door of the room, plunged down a passage lined with faggots of fire-wood, leading to the back of the house, ran up a flight of stone steps until I bumped my head against an iron trap-door, for the bolt of which Frontin was already fumbling; and a moment later we emerged from the level of the broken pavement of a little courtyard from which an archway opened on a narrow street.

"Now how did you know we could get out that way?" I panted in wonder, as Frontin, leaving the lamp burning on the steps, carefully lowered the door into its place.

"Asked the woman whether there wasn't any other way out as soon as we got in," he replied simply. "Now we must take to our heels again."

We resumed our swift trot and held it until in the

darkness of a singularly narrow street between houses of unusual height his footfalls slowed and stopped, and beside me I heard the scratching sound of leather soles on stone. Then his voice whispered from just above my head:

"Reach up until you feel a drain-pipe from the eaves. There is a window ledge two feet above it. Lay hold of the pipe and leap, catching the ledge. Then pull yourself up and scramble in."

I succeeded in doing this at the second attempt. Frontin's hand guided me through a long room and out into a hall whence we climbed five flights of empty, creaking stairs with tall, round-topped windows full of the hot stars of the summer night ahead of us on every landing. We turned at last into a low chamber under the mansard. Frontin got a window open and crawled out into the narrow gutter that ran under the eaves. Feeling my way, I followed him, and he stretched back over me to close the window in a precarious attitude that made me sick with terror at that height.

"Don't look down," he cautioned, crawling forward on hands and knees. The black slot of the street gaped below. Above and all around, save where the steep roof at my side seemed to be trying to elbow me off, the stars glittered dizzily. I fixed my eyes on the whitish blobs that my hands made against the leaden bottom of the trough in which we crept. One glance

about me had been enough. My legs felt all but lifeless; my elbows were limp; my breathing seemed to have stopped, when again he rose on his knees, pulled open a window and slipped inside.

He held the heavy curtain back, or I believe that the light touch of its folds as the draft blew it toward me would have sent me whirling to the pavement six stories below. I dragged myself across the sill and dropped in a heap on the floor.

"Monsieur le Marquis is within," he said, when I sat up, shamefaced enough, in the light of a pair of fine steel candlesticks in which he had set wax candles burning. He made a gesture toward the solid wall behind him, and added with the ceremonious manner which he had hardly used since our journey began, "While Monsieur le Comte refreshes himself with a little rest, I will inform Monsieur le Marquis that he awaits his convenience."

A broad plastered chimney-breast formed the greater part of the wall he had indicated. At the bottom was a small fireplace with iron bars set in the stone slabs and a narrow stone shelf above the opening. He stooped, drew one of the bars toward him, pushed it sharply back, and set his shoulder to the stonework. The whole heavy structure slowly revolved until it stood edgewise to the room, leaving a low opening on either side of it. Through one of these Frontin passed, his slight figure

drawn sharp against the strong candle-light of the farther room. A low voice hailed his appearance. But, low at it was, it was a hateful voice, hard and sneering.

"So you have brought him at last? *Mon dieu*, but you have been God's own time in doing so!"

A murmur of dialogue followed, in which after a brief interchange a third voice blended. Then the hard sneering tones came out clearly:

"I'll trust nobody, I tell you. A fool like you could be duped in a thousand ways."

I was straining my ears for the answer to this; but with a metallic click the fireplace began to revolve again — not back to where it was, however, but turning the remainder of the half-circle. Shelf and burning candles disappeared. By the vanishing light I saw the exact replica of the fireplace swing into view, the opening on either side shrink to a crack and close. A second click, and I was in darkness and silence.



CHAPTER IX

MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS DE REMBERVILLE

THAT room up there under the roof was stifling hot; for the first time in nearly twenty hours I was free from the necessity of effort and the threat of immediate peril; and in less than five minutes, I believe, I was sound asleep. The smell of burning incense awakened me, but for some little while I thought that I was dreaming a fantastic dream. On either side of me great columns stretched away in dim perspective, their summits lost in darkness overhead. On an iron tripod perhaps six feet in front of me a shallow basin smoked whitely and sent a glow into the sockets of a skull on a low pedestal immediately behind it. Above it shone a brown bare chest looped with shining necklaces, and a dark-eyed, thin-lipped, livid face in the square striped head-dress of an Egyptian priest. Without quite knowing how, I was aware, as one is in dreams, that my uncle and Frontin were present, and that the one was animated by a kind of quiet fury of determination, the other filled with a sense of outrage that ever and again burst into muttered expostulation. A soft, eery music of stringed

instruments swept through the room, now rising in a way to make one's nerves quiver in expectation of some throbbing climax that never came, now falling till the eardrums stretched for the least pulsation.

The long brown hands of the priest sprinkled fresh fuel on the basin, making it fume and flare. The skull in the sudden light appeared to move forward abruptly, and for a moment deep-sunk eyes seemed to stare from its sockets with a look that answered mine. Then the flame sank; all was as it had been; and I found my gaze caught and held by the eyes of the priest. His pupils widened to dark pools that all but overflowed the irises. His thin lips writhed and closed and writhed again, showing yellow fangs beneath, while a steady mutter of words in an outlandish tongue timed itself to the now monotonous wailing of the strings. His long cruel-looking hands began to make slow passes, reaching toward my face and drawing slowly back again.

It may have been because I was but halfway dragged from my weary stupor, or perhaps I owed it to the hard-headedness of the mingled Dutch and New England side of my ancestry, that I felt no yielding to the mesmeric spell this creature would have laid upon me. Or perhaps I still thought I dreamed. At all events it came to me, as it sometimes comes to one in nightmares, that I need only make a single effort of will in



THE PRIEST SPRINKLED FRESH FUEL ON THE BASIN

order to escape from these weird surroundings. To think, "But this is only a dream," is enough. I may actually have said the words. At once my tense fingers relaxed on the arms of the great chair in which I found myself; my stiffened face broke into a smile. Gone was the temple's long arcade; the music ceased as with the closing of a door; the priest in his hieratic head-dress turned into a half-clad middle-aged ruffian in a tawdry scarf and glass beads, who would have been the better for a bath and who bit his lips in angry mortification before he could turn to my uncle and say smoothly:

"I have failed, monsieur, as the ancient arts must ever fail when they deal with a personality still untouched by evil."

I have often wished since that I had had the address to thank the fellow for the compliment so obviously trumped up to excuse his failure. But now Frontin produced lighted candles from behind a cupboard door, and all my attention was for my uncle. Propped up in his great bed, his chest, one arm and forehead swathed in bandages, he looked like nothing so much as a sort of devil's caricature of my father. The same black eyes looked at me from either side of the same fine, high-bridged nose that drooped over small, well-shaped lips. But though the lips smiled, they sneered; the glance of the eyes was hard; the downward curve of the nose,

which in my father was humorous, was predatory in this man. He spoke to the fawning charlatan, but without turning his eyes away from mine, and his low tone cut like a whip.

"You may go, Monsieur Sartelle. Frontin will pay you one *louis*, though you have failed to earn anything. It may help you to remember that, if my presence here becomes known, yours in Paris will not long remain a secret from the authorities."

He turned to me.

"So you are my nephew, Henri Charles Joseph de Mirecourt — and still unspotted from the world? I suppose that as your uncle I ought to congratulate you on the circumstance. Pray tell me. Does it arise from never having done any of the things society has agreed to condemn, or from the fact that in a new country the natural man is unconscious of any guilt attending on his natural actions? The question interests me."

"Let us say rather that it arises from Monsieur Sartelle's need of an excuse, sir," I replied with the best ironical air I could muster.

One side of his short upper lip lifted at that, and his eyes showed the cold gleam that stood for a smile in them.

"Come. That's better," he said. "I have met with enough misfortunes of late without suffering the infliction of a blameless nephew. Will you have the

goodness to draw that chair close to my bedside and to seat yourself in it? ”

His fine hands, almost as pale and translucent as the parchments they moved among, pushed aside a clutter of charts covered with astrological diagrams and symbols that strewed the sheet, and the sight of these things called to my mind what my father had told me of how in his youth all Paris had gone mad over strange cults, of Cagliostro and Mesmer, and how men whom Voltaire had taught to rend in pieces the faith of their forefathers had turned to Astrology, Egyptian Masonry, and Animal Magnetism with the gullibility of yokels at a country fair.

“Sartelle is a dull fool in himself,” my uncle went on. “But he has a power — with a favorable subject quite an extraordinary power. You will forgive me, my dear nephew, for subjecting you to it. It seemed possible that it might yield most desirable results for you as well as for me. These horoscopes, yours and mine, show a singular affinity.”

Again his hands strayed among the parchments, and he launched forth upon so long an exposition of planets, houses and their lords, oppositions, and I don’t know what beside, that the sleep from which I had been lately awakened was near to overcoming me. All that I could make out of it was that according to our stars our fates were singularly interwoven. But suddenly I

started wide awake. For without the least change of voice he began to repeat the old rhyming French of the Red Prior's Ritual:

*" Shall human tears avail alone
To break the strength of the mortised stone,
Melt the lead and rend the rock,
And wash the Blood of Antioch? "*

I scratched my drowsy wits together, glad that in my efforts to solve that puzzle I had brooded over every syllable of the old verses. Since mesmerism had failed, my knowledge of them was to show whether or not I was the person I said I was. My uncle's cynical smile said as much, and I wondered what would happen to me, had I not been ready with the antiphonal quatrain:

*" Tears alone shall not avail;
But tears of heaven shall prevail
Through lead and copper and grovèd rock
To wash the Blood of Antioch."*

He nodded as I paused.

"Go on," he said haughtily.

"Pardon me, monsieur," I replied. "But if you are not yet sure that I am your nephew, I am by no means certain that you are my uncle."

"Can you imagine any other grown man cumbering

his mind with such a rigmarole?" he asked, impatience pricking through his suavity in a dozen places.

"Well," I retorted lightly, "there's a certain Aristide Legardien, for one. I warrant he could give you question and answer from beginning to end."

"Ah, he gave some trouble, my brother wrote," he returned, ignoring my thrust at the carelessness which had allowed Legardien to gain a knowledge of his purpose. "Well, then, my nephew, answer me this:

*Shall iron avail, or steel of proof,
If water lacks on the church's roof?
Shall stroke of spade or crowbar's shock
Show what was spilled at Antioch?"*

I took him up quickly:

*"Water and copper, lead and stone,
These prevail, and these alone.
Steel shall ruin it, iron mock,
The search for the Blood of Antioch."*

"Astonishingly plain, isn't it?" His glance derided me. "Foolishly clear, when one has seen the place. Either our ancestors were thundering blockheads or their cupidity was too weak for their superstitious cowardice. Listen. There is a great cross cut deep in the chancel floor; one arm ends not far from the left side,

the north side of the high altar, the other just below a leper's squint in the south wall. Outside the door of the leper's squint a great copper drain-pipe descends from the eaves to a cistern. The bottom of the groove which forms the transverse of the cross slopes ever so slightly toward its northern end. You'd never guess it with the unaided eye, but a spirit-level shows it plainly. I tested it one dull autumn when the late king's displeasure confined me to my estates. Now about that northern end of the cross-arm there is no mortar between the stones, and seems never to have been any. It is all clear to you now, is it not? "

"Forgive my stupidity, *monsieur mon oncle*," I protested. "But, to begin with, I have never seen the inside of one of your great old churches. What a leper's squint is, for instance, I cannot imagine."

He explained to me that it was a little closet built against the outside wall of the church, or into the thickness of it, where a leper, entering by a separate door, might watch through a slit in the stone the celebration of the mass, from which otherwise his dreadful disease cut him off. But even after he had reminded me that Jaques de Mirecourt had been in the East and so must have seen the waterworks of the Saracens, I had to ask him to go over the whole matter in detail, so dull was I in fitting the pieces of the puzzle together. From that he turned to the arrangements he had made

for my journey, and had not finished with them, when Frontin entered with two bowls of steaming chocolate and a loaf of fresh bread, and opened the curtains to the full light of dawn.

"You will set out from Noisy, then," my uncle summed up, "at a little before daylight tomorrow. The intervening time you may have for sleep and rest, and indeed you could do little else with safety."

"I could return to the American Legation, sir," I replied with a studied carelessness. "Mr. Morris would receive me and keep me until means were found to send me back to America."

He stared at me with the astonishment I had intended to provoke, and I stared back. For I still had to make my bargain with him and I smarted in every nerve at the cynical superciliousness of his every look and tone. This man who had stripped my father of his birthright, put my mother to open shame, and coolly regarded the dangers into which his carelessness had thrust my father and me, the risks I had still to run, as things that were his due! Even this refuge in which I found him infuriated me with its splendid furniture and rich hangings. He affected to regard it as a place of squalid hardship; and as I thought of the simple bleakness of the attic where my father had lain sick all winter, my brain grew clear and cold with wrath.

"Perhaps my wounds have made me dull," he said,

when at length he had failed to stare me down, "but I totally failed to catch the bearing of your last remark."

I repeated it without change or amplification.

"Then you came to France on a pleasure jaunt — forgive me if I add, at my expense — and not liking what you find here, you propose to return? It that it?"

"I came to France, monsieur, on the expectations you held out to my father of mending his fortunes and finding a career for myself. Since you have alluded to neither in the whole course of our talk, I assume that I acted on a false presumption."

He did not reply at once, but lay back on his pillows, examining the state of his finger-nails and frowning at one of them, which was broken.

"Ah," he breathed at last, as if thinking aloud, "the bourgeois strain. I had forgotten it." He raised his eyes to mine. "Doubtless in America the nephew does bargain with the uncle, the heir with the present incumbent. Pardon me for not thinking of such a thing. Here in France —"

"In France, monsieur," I interrupted him, for I was in no mood to listen to his attempt to fasten a false sense of shame upon me — "In France, monsieur, from what I have been able to gather concerning the customs of its nobility, an heir is only free to rob his brother of his share of the inheritance."

He continued to look at me, without anger, with a coolly speculative glance.

"You are very like your father," he said finally.

"Thank you, monsieur." I rose and bowed. "I have your permission to withdraw then?"

"Unless you will oblige me by stating the terms on which you will carry out this mission."

"Simply that the treasure, if I find it, shall be divided equally between you and my father after you have been re-imbursed from it for the expenses incurred in the search, including of course my own in coming here," I replied, with satisfaction at what I considered a businesslike summing up of the matter.

"But this is Yankee munificence!" he exclaimed.

"It is plain common sense," I retorted, unmoved by his sarcasm. "Without your consent I cannot reach the treasure; without me, if I understand your feelings correctly, you cannot touch it. Together then we should share it."

"My feelings?" he repeated ironically. "I should thank you, I suppose, for not twitting me about my superstitious dread of the Red Prior's curse, since I did not feel that I could proceed without your assistance. But, that aside, has it occurred to you, my dear nephew, that it will be in your power to pass right on into Germany with the gems, when you have found them? Considering that, it seems to me that I am reposing

sufficient confidence in you to entitle me to a return in kind."

"You think your brother's son would be capable of such infamy?"

"But you thought your father's brother capable of worse," he retorted with a weary gentleness.

"Monsieur," I said, rallying my thoughts around the fact that while he knew quite well that he could trust me, I had good reason for never trusting him, "in reposing so much confidence in me you followed freely your own judgment. I must beg of you the privilege with equal freedom to follow mine."

"Come," he exclaimed and gave me the smile of a chess-player for the move that has spoiled his game. "Your father could never have said that; he could never resist the imputation of a lack of generosity. I accept your proposal, my dear nephew, entirely in the spirit in which you make it — not because I wish to, that is to say, but because I must. We understand each other?"

He stretched his hand to the little silver bell that stood upon the bedside table and rang for Frontin, who had left us to breakfast by ourselves. I bowed.

"I think we do, monsieur," I said, but I wondered whether this man was ever to be understood, for his sudden agreement to my proposal filled me with an

uneasiness which I was at a loss to account for in reason.

"Frontin, have the goodness to open the passage for Monsieur de Mirecourt," he directed. But Frontin with a word of apology stooped and whispered in his ear. He gave a laugh, three parts impatience and one of amusement.

"Mademoiselle Hoyden? Confound you, Frontin, I had managed to forget all about the wench. The politicians will not trouble their heads about such a harum-scarum, except to take her horses for the cavalry. The peasants may steal her pigs, nothing more. But if I may trouble you a moment longer, my dear nephew. Frontin reminds me of another matter, and would have me beg you to undertake it for me, though I warn you it is not susceptible of another Yankee bargain. A certain ward of mine, a young cousin of my late wife — but I remember now, I made a tentative suggestion concerning her in my letter to your father, and he wrote back that your response was the reverse of enthusiastic. You may as well have a look at her, however. A young beauty, they say — even old Frontin here says so — and very rich."

"Am I to understand that you desire me to wait upon her and convey her to a place of safety, if I think it necessary?" I asked stiffly, for his manner of speaking

of this young girl, his ward, embarrassed and disgusted me.

“Oh, wait upon her, by all means, if you have an easy opportunity,” he replied. “As for placing her in safety, you can hardly do that without delaying your return here, which is not to be thought of. Her old aunt will look after that, probably carry her off to Germany, if things begin to grow too unpleasant.”

I bowed my acquiescence, and was retiring, when: “Stay,” he commanded. His hands roved among the parchments and astrological diagrams before him until they found one which he examined closely. “There may be more in this than you think. Here’s Venus ascendant in your House of Life next month. My felicitations, my dear nephew. But guard yourself. She’s a good deal of a tartar by her aunt’s account.” And with a wave of his hand and a smile of cynical amusement he dismissed me.



CHAPTER X

A MISERABLE JOURNEY

WE DID not leave on the morrow, Frontin and I, or for ten days after that. Paris was shut up like a box, and terror mounted guard with pike and sabre at all the barriers. The hireling troops of Brunswick were said to be actually at the frontier now. Lafayette, the great apostle of Liberty, himself, had turned against the revolution and after a vain attempt to lead his army against the city had fled into the Netherlands. The king, suspended from office by the Assembly, was a prisoner with his family in the medieval fortress of the Temple; and the royalists, who were supposed to be plotting how most quickly to deliver the nation to the vengeance of the invaders, were being seized in ever-increasing numbers and sent to join the crowd of suspects that already filled the prisons.

Frontin brought me this news from day to day and, when I chafed at the delay which all this entailed, strove to amuse me with a bit of gossip about Jefferson Garth — Major Garth, as I should call him now. He had married the pretty little milliner's girl after a four days'

courtship and had set out the morning after to take command of one of the raw untrained battalions of volunteers which made up so large a part of Dumouriez's army around Verdun.

Meanwhile I alternately slept and grilled under the hot roof of my low attic, and with an excellent map spread before me studied the route which I was to travel, striving to fix in my memory every bridge and crossroad, the name of every village and town and its relation to every other. For a map found in the possession of such a person as I was to pretend to be upon that journey would lead straight to a hangman's noose or a firing-squad, and I could not count on not being separated from Frontin by the chances of the adventure.

Our plan was simple and, if it required a good deal of time to carry out, that very thing made it more likely to circumvent Legardien's vigilance. Once outside of Paris, we were to join, at the town of Brie-Comte-Robert, an army contractor who would receive us gladly as additional grooms for a convoy of horses which he was sending as remounts to the cavalry on the northeastern frontier. With these we were to travel by way of Provins and Arcis-sur-Aube to Bar-le-Duc, thus avoiding all danger of capture by mounted patrols of the invading army. Then some rainy night near Bar-le-Duc we were to slip away to Remberville, divert the water from the chancel roof by means of a length

of drain-pipe through the leper's squint and set it flowing down the transverse arm of that cross in the floor of the sanctuary. Undermined by this steady stream the flagstones would gape or slip aside and, if tradition spoke true, the Red Prior's rubies would flash in our eyes with the hoarded brilliance of five hundred years.

But, as day followed day and the vigilance at the barriers did not relax, it seemed more and more improbable that we could slip out of the city without Legardien's knowledge. At last it was decided that I should leave in my proper person: as a young American gentleman, that is to say, making the grand tour, accompanied by his servant, and just now bound for southern Germany. At first it seemed to me that this was playing exactly our enemy's game. He was sure to be keeping a close watch on the passport bureau for just such a move.

Frontin smiled. My uncle was counting on that, it appeared, and Legardien had already fallen into the trap. For, two hours after the passport had been issued, he had left Paris, ostensibly on a government mission to Bar-le-Duc, doubtless with the intention of lying in wait for us at Remberville and, when we had recovered the treasure, having us arrested as spies of Brunswick. Disguised and without even plausible explanations of our business there, it would give him little trouble to

dispose of us and seize the treasure, it seemed to me, and I said so.

"Yes, if he should wait until we come," Frontin agreed. "But will he? Consider: he will expect us to arrive not more than two days behind him; we do not come; a week goes by, and still we do not come. He sends back along the road, to learn at last that we gave up our chaise at the first stage out of Paris and nothing has been seen of us since. Unless I greatly mistake our man, he will return here to prosecute the search for us at this end, leaving us a free field."

After the ten days' confinement under that roasting roof I would have embraced any plan that enabled me to set out upon our errand, and to this day I have not been able to think of a better one, much as this left to chance. So the morrow's sun discovered us approaching the fires and picket-lines of the convoy of horses in a rude bivouac. We both wore the cast-off boots and breeches, coarse jackets, and ragged cloaks appropriate to grooms out of work; and since we had walked cross-country most of the night after leaving our chaise at Claye, I doubt if there was anything out of keeping with these costumes in our general appearance of weariness and dirt. An hour later, my hands full with the antics of a frolicsome mare and two young geldings, to say nothing of the vicious brute I rode on, it seemed to me that I had been a horse-boy for years and should



always be one unless the machinations of Legardien bought me a welcome release in death.

I was still to pass through many hardships and to have death at my shoulder more than once before I was safe out of France, but never before or after was I more thoroughly miserable and my life in more constant danger, I believe, than in the ten days that followed. It was a year since I had been on a horse, and I was soft with a winter of city living and work in a

counting-house and slack in every muscle from the enforced idleness of my attic. And in this condition I was thrown suddenly into a life of long hours in the saddle, in torrid heat, in charge of four half-broken horses whose one idea of man appeared to be that of a merciless tyrant for whom instant death would be too easy a fate.

Frontin stood the work better than I did. Small, light men were always in condition, and he had been brought up on a farm, he explained modestly, when I wondered at the ease with which he made the change from the cushioned life of a confidential house-servant. It was the company we had to keep that troubled him. I am aware that the poet Robert Burns has written, "A man's a man, for a' that "; but the foul language and fouler imaginations of those stable-sweepings with whom we shared our daily work and our straw at night must have turned even his strong stomach, had he been thrown with them for as long a time as we were. There was no avoiding either the proximity of their filthy bodies or the sound of their filthier language. But I must say in justice to them that they were probably as little conscious of the offensiveness of the latter as they were of that of the former.

Each day Frontin grew more quiet, his rabbit-face smaller and whiter, the lips of his little inverted V of a mouth more tightly set together, though his activity

was undiminished and the more disagreeable the task, the greater his zeal in attacking it. Then, late one afternoon, when the hot weather broke in torrents of rain, some particularly abominable outburst of obscene profanity transcended his endurance.

"Silence!" he cried; "Be silent!" and swept the little group, struck still with amazement, with eyes that blazed in his white face. "No one shall so abuse my Master's name without at least my protest."

I looked to see him felled by a blow, and sprang to his side. There was not so much as a laugh of ridicule. Out of that instant of astonished stillness the men turned to watering the horses—in shame, perhaps, the more decent of them; all in embarrassment, and not one with a sign of anger. He who had called down the rebuke even muttered a clumsy attempt at an apology. And that was all there was to it. There followed no change in their relations with him, and no improvement in their manner of speech, except what might be ascribed to the weather. For there is a degree of misery in which even profanity fails to be an alleviation, and now it rained, the cold rain of northeastern France, day after day.

Here was a strange servant, thought I, and I might have thought back to other things that were unusual in a man in such a station. But now, perhaps because I was searching for any pretext to escape from the slow

torture of the convoy, I began to fear another danger to the success of our mission. It was true that Legardien was not the man to go on waiting at Remberville when day followed day and still we did not come. But neither was he likely to return as far as Claye and attempt to trace us from there. To do so would be to put us, wherever we were likely to be, between him and the treasure, for one thing. Nor could he linger indefinitely at Remberville, if he would. At every town we heard how Brunswick's army was rolling slowly but irresistibly up the valley of the Meuse. Longwy had surrendered; Verdun was expected to make no better resistance. Dumouriez was said to have retreated across the river. Far-ranging Prussian hussars might make Remberville decidedly unhealthy for French government agents almost any day now.

In these circumstances was it likely that Legardien should be deterred from trying his own hand at unearthing the treasure by the five-hundred-years-old rigmarole of the Red Prior's curse? I thought of the impulsive audacity with which he had seized upon the accident of the broken foil to attempt to kill me, of his firing upon his accomplices to clear himself of his share in the night attack upon us in the street; and, rolling over in the wet straw that made our bed, I whispered my anxieties into Frontin's ear. Let us take the horses

assigned to us and ride for Remberville at once, I urged.

But he reminded me of the pickets of armed peasants which we had passed at almost every bridge, of the strict surveillance maintained at the entrance to every town. Were we to leave the protection of the convoy, he predicted, we could not travel twenty miles without being arrested. Once over the bridge at Bar-le-Duc, however, a few hours swift riding on a road with none but unimportant villages on it would bring us to our destination with little risk. I renewed the argument next morning, when our animals, reduced to sullen docility by the wet, gave me the opportunity to do so. For I boiled with impatience at the thought of Legardien, free all these days to work his will in the priory chancel, and I fear I said as much with more force than reason. Frontin smiled.

“If what troubles you is less the thought of losing what we seek than of Legardien’s possessing it,” he said, “you may set your mind at rest so far. At worst he will only destroy it in his efforts to obtain it. It will never be his, unless he is cleverer than I am, or — admit it — than you were before your uncle confided the secret to you.”

This was true enough so far as the secret means of getting possession of the treasure went. But why it

should not yield to good hard work with pick and crowbar I could not see.

"Neither can I," Frontin admitted. "But the old ritual is as positive on that point as on any other. One may as well doubt it all as doubt any part of it."

"Except that it might very well have been put in to discourage any one who had screwed up his courage to risk the curse," I grumbled. But as I rode along, I found myself keeping time to the pace of my horse with the measure of the quatrain.

*Water and copper, lead and stone,
These prevail and these alone.
Steel shall ruin it, iron mock,
The search for the Blood of Antioch.*

Two days later in the drizzling twilight we saw the spires and chimneys of Bar-le-Duc crowning the hills in front of us at last; and that night Frontin woke me from my first sleep in the rat-ridden, draft-swept barracks of the horse-yard to whisper that the moment had come for us to be off; a brigade of artillery was marching northward to join Dumouriez; and in the crowd of horsemen and vehicles lay our chance to pass the guards that held the bridge.

The moon had risen, the incessant downpour changed to flying squalls, when at length we had managed to extricate our horses from the rest, saddle and bridle

them by sense of touch, and join the last of the long column. Ahead of us it undulated down the length of the bridge, a dark stream of animals and carriages that clanked and rumbled over the stone arches and shot moist gleams of fugitive moonlight from gun-barrel and caisson tire, from sabre-hilt and headstall. Among the rout of fourgons and camions that closed the march we passed unnoticed, until a road forked to the left. There we halted and, when the column had gone far enough for us to do so unobserved, rode for Remberville as swiftly as the darkness and the great hills would permit.

The map which I had studied so intensely in my attic room rose before my mind's eye. We had scarce a dozen miles to go from Bar-le-Duc — perhaps another hour under these conditions. Already we must be on the plateau that slopes gently to the valley of the Aire. Down a steep little hill we rode into a hollow full of houses, whose blank walls and shuttered windows echoed to the clatter of our horses' feet. Out of it and up on the hilltops again the wind smote us furiously, and the rain drove before it as if to make up for the lull with which it had favored us. Horse and man, we bowed our heads against it. But Frontin still held us to the trot with an evident sureness of his way and whereabouts which I marveled at in that featureless obscurity.

About an hour had passed, I suppose, when I realized

without warning that we were again in a village street. Next moment Frontin had stopped and was dismounting. I did likewise, and in the same moment felt the loom of a great building over me. We led our horses through a gateway and on to the grass of an enclosure, and made them fast to the bars of an iron grill. Now against the torn sky I could glimpse the pinnacles and fretted roof of a Gothic apse. Its eastern end was to my right. So, directly before me, must open the doorway of the leper's squint; and as if to remind me of the part it had in my adventure, the glutted drain-pipe in the angle of the wall choked and gurgled with its burden of water from the overflowing eaves.

Frontin slipped a heavy, short-handled hammer and chisel into my hands, and I felt the claw-ended bar in his own, as he did so. With these we must tear away a length of pipe near the ground, rob another of its elbow, and bend the downpour to our uses. But first it was necessary to pace off the required length. He made a step toward the leper's door to do this, halted and clutched my arm, pointing. Near the bottom of one of the long chancel windows the leaded glass gleamed with a suspicion of light. Then, as we stood transfixed by the sight of such a thing in that place — for Frontin had told me that since the abolition of the religious houses no services had been held there — a sound came to our ears above the hiss of the falling rain and the

throaty racket of the water-pipes. Faint but unmistakable from within the church came the clang of metal on stone.

Frontin pulled me forward, and together we crept to the door of the leper's squint.

CHAPTER XI

MURDER IN THE SANCTUARY

AFTER the darkness outside the little stone-walled chamber seemed brilliant, the narrow lancet, giving upon the chancel, ablaze with light. We whipped inside, opening and closing the door with soft swiftness lest the draft betray us, and together we peered through that orifice which had revealed the comforting mystery of the Mass to so many generations of the outcast. Three tall altar candles, stuck in their own grease, flared and guttered on the stone floor of the sanctuary. Beyond them a dark-lantern sent its beam into the opening whence a great flagstone had just been raised; and a man with the matted hair and bare legs of the most degraded type of peasant laborer still bent above the bar which poised this stone upon its edge. Across from him Legardien in his green redingote, with the butts of two large pistols projecting from the tricolor sash which now garnished it, bent his slant eyes on the spot where the slab had rested. His lips parted in a greedy smile; his words reached us clearly above the drumming of the rain.

"Little remains to give us trouble here," he said.

A third man, who carried a stone-cutter's hammer in his hand, but the cheap finery of whose dress marked him for a hanger-on about gambling-rooms and race-tracks, stepped across the opening, as if for a better look. This brought him close to the peasant with the bar.

"Now," Legardien cried out sharply. The iron hammer swung and fell upon the bent head of the peasant with the sound of the crushing of some great soft egg. The slaughtered man bent double and went down almost without a sound, the slab across his legs.

"Now try your hammer and chisel," Legardien directed coolly. "You struck well. I didn't think you had it in you." And without a second glance at his victim he stooped to observe the place where the other was to begin. Clink, went the hammer, clink, clink, now here, now there, testing the time-hardened mixture of cement and rubble for its weakest spot. But I hardly heard it, hardly saw what they did. Sick with horror at that cold-blooded deed, I dug my fingers into the molding of the lancet to stay my wobbling knees. Frontin's face was white with righteous wrath. His lips shook.

"You have your pistols," he whispered.

I nodded. I had them right enough, loaded and primed, in my waistband under my shirt, where I had carried them since we left the chaise. But, guessing

his thought, I shook my head. No doubt those men in the chancel richly deserved to be shot down with as little mercy as they had given. Frontin in his noble anger thought so, and you will learn, as I did, that he had been trained to make the finest moral distinctions. But they were also our adversaries; their hands were all but on the prize for which we strove. How could I constitute myself the minister of justice when I had so much to gain by doing so?

I do not pretend that I reasoned it out that way in those brief moments. But I suppose it was some such scruple that stayed my hand when I had them thus at the mercy of my pistols. The opportunity passed in less time than it takes to write it. Legardien on his knees, scraping away with his fingers the broken stone and fragments of cement loosened by his companion's blows, uttered a low exclamation, pushed the man aside and, pulling the bar from beneath the body of the dead peasant, let drive at the point where the chisel had made its last attack. The bar sank a third of its length and stuck with a crunching sound at an angle of about forty-five degrees with the floor.

You will have guessed the meaning of that sound, no doubt, and wonder that I did not. I heard Frontin groan. With his greater faith in the Red Prior's Ritual he was quick to sense what was happening. But the brilliant little picture framed in the molded edges of

the lancet held me spell-bound: the great fluted pillars of the chancel, now shooting sixty feet to the scutcheon-spangled groining of the roof, now shrunk to less than the height of a man, as the candles flamed or smoked; that grotesque parody of death folded over the slab of pavement; the smooth groove of the transverse arm of the cross running straight from me to those two straining figures that heaved upon the bar until the stiff steel bowed and sprang.

The crunching sound attended each of their efforts. The end of the bar had slipped beneath some heavier stone and was grinding pebbles and cement between its end and the stones beneath, I thought. Heave and spring upon it as they might, it did no more. At last they stopped, his companion to lean breathless on that very arm of the prior's chair mentioned in the old rhyme, Legardien to catch up hammer and chisel and begin to test the rough surface from which the slab had been removed. But he was not working at random now. I saw him measure the angle of the crowbar with his eye, gauge the length of it that protruded, and begin on a line in prolongation of its length at a point where another bar, entering at the same angle would meet the end of the first beneath the stone. At the third tap of his hammer the sound changed, and the chisel slipped half out of sight. The other man was ready now. With such haste that they hindered each other

they wrenched the bar out of the old opening and thrust it into the new, heaved, twisted, and sawed it back and forth. From the vantage of my full height above their task I saw the pebbly surface that they wrought upon crack three ways from the gleaming shaft that pierced it. It lifted in an area about three feet across, and sank in a broken mass of small stones and fragments of cement.

Upon this debris the two men flung themselves. Their faces shone with sweat. Their fingers clutched among the shards, flung them by handfuls over their shoulders. The dark-lantern, struck by one of these discharges, went over with a clang, its flame extinguished. One of the tall candles was struck down, and lay pouring its wax upon the pavement. Only a great rough stone as big as two men's heads checked the insane onslaught. Legardien rose to his feet and stood, his right hand thrust into the folds of his sash, looking down with an expression of contempt on his companion, who with fingers torn and bloody still scratched and burrowed around the edges of the obstacle.

"Get on your legs, man. Get your hands under it and lift," he ordered sharply.

The other stared at him a moment like one coming out of a daze, then scrambled up and did as he was bidden. Legardien made one stride, hand still in his sash, eyes fixed on the straddled legs, bowed back and



LEGARDIEN'S HAND FLASHED FROM HIS SASH TO MEET HIM

straining arms, as his companion raised the stone from its place, swung it between his knees and sent it rumbling along the pavement. The man staggered back a step or two with the recoil of the effort. Legardien's hand flashed from his sash to meet him, drove a slim knife to the hilt in his throat and jerked it backward beneath the left ear. A thrust of the shoulder sent the collapsing body to sprawl its length across its victim of a few minutes before, and Legardien, with hands that shook not the least, was relighting the dark-lantern at the flame of the fallen candle.

"*Accipientes gladium, in gladio peribunt,*" I heard Frontin mutter behind me. But even a servant quoting the Vulgate so appositely could not startle me at that moment. At last I had begun to wonder what I ought to do. The treasure would be in Legardien's hands in another moment. Should we dash around to the main door to head him off? He might well have other means of egress. Must I shoot him down like a dog, or lose my father's fortune for him? I drew my pistols and sighted one of them across the sill. After all, the fellow was as much a thief as if he had broken into our house. But it was upon his thigh that I drew a bead, and I determined not to pull the trigger until he actually turned to leave the place with the gems in his possession.

He had set the dark-lantern so that its beam would

shine down into the hole in the pavement, and once more he knelt beside it. But, though he could kill without trembling, the lust for wealth shook him like the ague. The hole was now too deep for my glance to reach the bottom of it, but I could see his elbows twitching and his shuddering shoulders as he thrust his hands downward. They came up with a wedge of smooth-cut stone held point-down between them. He cast this aside, started to reach down again, and paused, staring into the cavity. Then there burst from him a sound, half groan, half sob. He tore off sash and coat, thrust back the ruffles at his wrists until the thin, sinewy forearms were bare to the elbow, and began scooping from the hole handfuls of fine sand that caught the light with a thousand ruddy sparkles as he strained it between his fingers. He fingered each handful over and over upon the time-worn stone before he reached for another. His lips never ceased to move. The sound that came from them rose from a worrying mumble to a low wail, and stopped.

He seized the lantern, stared long and wildly into the cavity, caught up his pistols, leaving coat and scarf, a strange bright splash of color in that scene of desecration and death, and fled down the dim vista of the nave. By the dancing beam of the lantern we traced his progress till the wicket in the western doors thudded behind him.

Frontin's voice at my elbow made me start.

"If he sees the horses, we are dead men," said he.

I was slow to answer, for the last two lines of that quatrain were lilting through my head.

*Steel shall ruin it, iron mock,
The search for the Blood of Antioch.*

By the shape of that stone wedge I read what had happened. Every thrust of the bar had been guided by carefully prepared channels to strike it. Every prise and lift and twist had had it for a fulcrum. And between it and the neighboring stones on either side of it those great rubies had been so disposed as to be ground to powder by such pressure. It may seem strange that my mind ran upon this mechanical problem, but so it was until Frontin's voice recalled me to our situation. Then I blazed with anger and chagrin. There I had stood in my self-satisfied incredulity, letting my father's fortune be destroyed before my eyes, because forsooth I was too fine to take at disadvantage this red-handed murderer who had twice struck at my father's life and mine!

"No," I said sharply to Frontin. "If he sees the horses it is he who is the dead man." And I slipped out of the door by the narrowest possible crack and closed it behind me. But through the railings at the end of the close I could see the beam of his lantern

shooting, now here, now there, on the blank windows and closed doors of the street leading away from the church, as if a drunken man had carried it. I was still watching its erratic course when I felt Frontin beside me.

"Those poor wretches within," he whispered, "it seems dreadful to leave them so. Will Monsieur le Comte permit me?"

"Certainly," I agreed, not understanding what he meant to do but eager to examine the means by which all our hopes had been ruined.

"There is a little door beside one of the choir buttresses, so hidden by the ivy that few know of it," he explained.

"A door there, man!" I cried in anger. "Why in Heaven's name didn't you tell me so? By that means we could have come upon them and cut off all chance of their escape."

"I hope Monsieur le Comte will pardon me, if I did wrong," he replied gently. "When he did not fire through the leper's squint I did not know what to think. It seemed to me that Monsieur le Comte placed so little faith in the ritual that he had determined to allow those wretches to dig up the treasure for him."

"Faith in the ritual! Am I not here after a journey of three thousand miles because of my faith in the ritual?" I demanded. But even as I uttered the words

I knew that he spoke more truly than I did in my angry wish to blame some one else for my fault, and I am glad — doubly glad on account of what was to happen a few minutes later — that I owned up to it then and there.

“Forgive me, Frontin,” I cried, and felt for his small thin hand. “I could not fire, could not fire from ambush — dolt that I was!”

“Your father, Monsieur le Comte, would say that your inability to do so did you honor, I believe from what I have heard of him,” Frontin replied. “It is I, after all, who should ask your pardon. I would have had you — I prompted you to send those two men to their account with all their sins upon their heads. I pray that God may forgive me.”

He lifted a dripping curtain of interwoven verdure, as he spoke, pushed open a door; and we stood in the candle-light at the end of a tier of richly carven choir stalls. He led me straight to the two dead bodies. We straightened their twisted limbs and laid them side by side before the steps of the stripped high-altar. Then he knelt and began, to my amazement, to intone in Latin the prayers which a priest says for the dead. I, too, knelt for a few moments.

But presently I took up one of the candles and in my turn peered down into the cavity which for so many centuries had held the ill-gotten treasure of my house.

It was as I expected to find it, a smooth-faced niche of stone with two opposing sides vertical and the other two sloped to correspond to the slanting surfaces of the wedge. Particles like coarse sand adhering to these, and gleaming red in the candle-light, proclaimed themselves the pulverized remnants of all for which the Red Prior had bartered his immortal soul. A little fine white sand at the bottom shot small glimmerings of the same rich color, but this was evidently so shallow that it was without the smallest notion of finding any considerable fragment of a gem that I pressed my fingers into it. Curiosity as to how the introduction of a stream of water could have made the treasure accessible was what actuated the movement. Possibly much fine sand had been so packed under the neighboring stone, which was of enormous thickness, that water would wash it away, allowing the stone to sink and the rubies to be taken out from that side. Possibly, I say, for I never finished that investigation.

My fingers encountered a jagged edge. Time had racked even the cunning workmanship of the medieval stone-mason. I probed a gap in that perfect joinery. The light sand filled it until I brushed and, head and shoulders sunk beneath the level of the floor, blew the opening clear. From the little cavity not three inches across something winked to my astonished eyes a deep, glowing red. With thumb and finger I seized it and

drew it forth into the light — a great ruby that glowed and sparkled like nothing I had ever seen before. Set in the very bottom of the cavity, presumably, with the apex of that stone wedge poised upon it so that the first application of force would grind it to powder, some shifting of the soil, subsidence due to centuries of frost and damp, had so moved the stones on which it rested as to allow it to slip down between them and escape destruction. I turned it in my fingers, let it roll in my cupped palms, fascinated by the red flashes darting from its fiery heart. For seven such gems one might have bought all Paris. I held it high, beside myself with excitement.

“Frontin,” I cried, forgetful of the steady mutter of his prayers. “Frontin!”

He turned, but his widening eyes darted their glance past me. Then he flung himself at me, hurling me to the ground. At the same instant the hollow vault of the church bellowed with the echoes of a pistol-shot. I rolled over, my right hand clutching for my weapons, the great ruby clasped tight in my left. Frontin wavered above me like a man in a sudden vertigo. Legardien in the act of snatching a second pistol from his belt took the broad low steps from the choir in a single leap, as I pulled mine clear.

Remember, in emergencies one always has more time than one thinks one has. Had my father spoken the

words that instant at my elbow, his wise counsel could not have rung more clearly in my ear. Lying on my left side, I had set my left hand like a crotch for my right before Legardien's feet had touched the pavement of the sanctuary, and as the muzzle of his pistol flew to the point, I fired both barrels in quick succession.

He stumbled, wavered; the pistol dropped from his hand; but he did not fall. The lifting of his weapon, perhaps, had deflected my glance in the very moment of pulling the trigger. I saw a red spot leap out on the whiteness of his shirt at the shoulder. Then he had spun round on one heel and fled through the choir and down the long aisle of the nave. I scrambled to my feet and dashed after him, pulling at my second pistol. But the cock was caught in a fold of my shirt, and by the time I had pulled it free he had become a vague white blur in the darkness. I fired at this. But the thud of the wicket in the great western doors told me a second later that, if I had not missed him clean, I had failed to stop him.

I returned to find Frontin sitting on the sanctuary steps, his crossed arms on his knees, his head sunk down upon them.

"You're hurt? He hit you?" I cried in consternation. "And I missed him, the clumsy fool that I was!"

He looked up with a singularly gentle smile on his



little, pointed face, but he was deadly pale and his mouth twitched with pain.

"It is nothing," he began, bit his lip and added, "at least I shall last out the ride to Vraincourt. There Mademoiselle de Renois —"

But I was too busy tearing a sleeve from my shirt to listen to him.

"Off with your clothes, man," I commanded. "Let's have a look at it. We must try to stop the bleeding, at least, before we start."

"What bleeding there will be, will be internal, my son, and neither of us has the skill to deal with that," he answered getting slowly to his feet. "Perhaps a surgeon from Clermont in the morning — And we must ride from here without a moment's loss, for that fellow will rouse the village if he has the strength left in him to do so."

He stood for some minutes before the high altar, head bowed and hand moving from forehead to breast in the sign of the cross, while I was recharging my pistols. I offered him the support of my arm, and at the eager gratitude with which he accepted it my heart sank still lower beneath its load of pity and apprehension. I had to lift him into the saddle; and when he was there, he begged me for the loan of my belt.

"Ah, that is better," he sighed, when he had drawn it tight. "These wounds in the body are very painful. I saw men wounded so in the war, and they all suffered greatly. So you will excuse, I hope —"

"Frontin, my friend, excuse — !" Grief choked me.

"Come, then. Let us be off," he said. "You remember your map, you say. We must go by Evres,

crossing the Aire by a ford I will show you below Fleury, then straight down the right bank. And in case I should fail — fall from my horse, you understand — Monsieur le Comte promises that he will not halt? I shall be done for then in any event, it is understood.”

I gave him my promise, since he insisted. But you may guess how likely I was to keep it. I would have dropped the ruby into the Aire and faced a firing-squad before I did that, I hope.

Before us the village street lay as empty and silent as when we entered it. Evidently Legardien had been too badly hurt to make us trouble and no sound of our struggle had penetrated those thick walls. Or if it had, there had been no ear to hear it. Only a dog in some kennel behind the houses howled dismally as we clattered out into the open country and felt the unbroken sweep of the gale in our faces once more.



CHAPTER XII

SCYTHE-BLADES AND TORCHES

THE rain had ceased and day had begun to break, when above the low mist through which we rode I made out the tuft of great trees that crowns the summit of Clermont-en-Argonne against the paling stars to westward. To the northwest the bristling backbone of the Argonne ridge caught the first glitter of the rising sun. My breast swelled with that returning tide of hope which comes with each new dawn, when one is not yet twenty.

For more than an hour, however, Frontin had returned nothing but a tight-lipped nod to my anxious inquiries. He swayed in his saddle and obviously could keep his seat only by clinging to the horse's mane. Well for us, I thought, that we could not have much farther to go. A bridge rang under our horses' shoes; the gable-ends and chimney-pots of a slowly climbing village street gleamed wet above the mist ahead; and from the quiet of a country sunrise we turned through great iron gates into a small bedlam.

The little courtyard into which we rode seemed full to bursting with noise and animation. A dozen couple

of English fox-hounds stopped our progress. Two mounted servants in hunting liveries, a splendid English hunter with a groom at his head, and a great berlin with four horses and postilions complete, crammed the narrow enclosure from the time-mellowed walls of the low-built château that formed three sides of it to the high wall that shut it from the road. The whole place rang with the eager whine and cry of the hounds, the hiss and crack of the huntsman's whip as he strove to still one more clamorous than the rest, the stamping of the impatient horses, but chiefly with the shrill incessant scolding of an angry old woman's tongue.

Thrusting out of a window of the carriage a face so thickly powdered that the ever-changing wrinkles about her mouth and nose spread a network of pink cracks over the flour-white surface, she poured forth sentence after breathless sentence of command, entreaty and adjuration. The object of this tirade was a tall, slender girl in a coat of hunting-pink, doeskin breeches and top-boots, who stood upon the broad steps before the portal and listened with grave brown eyes and curving lips whose firm line took nothing from their beauty.

"Stay? Stay and be butchered or worse?" the old lady screeched. "Do you wish to furnish amusement for a party of drunken hussars? The republican banditti are routed, I tell you, as I always said they would

be when they met troops led by gentlemen. By tonight they will be pouring through here, mad with terror, ripe for any mischief. And the officers are no better than the men. Get in, get in here beside me at —” She gasped for breath “— at once!”

“And join the runaway nobles who were afraid to stay in their country without German bayonets to protect them?” the girl asked. “No, thank you, my dear Aunt. I’m not forgetting that I am nobly born, but I remember that I was born a Frenchwoman, too.”

It seemed for a moment that between fear and anger the old lady had lost the power of speech. The tall plumes of her great traveling hat shook with her nodding, her eyes blinked and, as she swallowed, a spasm ran visibly down the long powdered throat which her dress left bare.

“Marie Adelaide,” she croaked finally, “for the last time I command you. Get in and leave with me at once. I shall not delay another instant. Any moment now these insolent peasants of yours may make our departure impossible. In the name of your guardian, in the name of your dead father, in the name of your dear departed mother —”

The girl’s dark brows came together at that, her eyes flashed, and her first words, though low, were sharp and incisive.

“My father and mother would have stood by their

country against the foreigner." Then in the quiet tone she had used before, "I am sorry to cross you, my dear Aunt. But I will not change my answer. And Father Frontin and a strange gentleman have just ridden in, whom I must welcome. *Au revoir*, my dear."

"Farewell," cried the old lady. "Alas, farewell, thou wayward child. God will lessen thy disobedience, oh, how sharply. I pray that he will have thee in his holy keeping, too," she added in a tone that made the prayer sound more like a malediction. "Drive on, postilions!"

But the girl had run to us, where we stood blocking the gateway. I swung off my horse to meet her, and would have raised her hand to my lips with a ceremony that should have done something to offset my horse-boy's dress and generally filthy appearance, had she not seized my hand in a frank clasp that made such a thing impossible.

"My cousin Mirecourt from America, are you not?" she asked, her eyes warm with welcome. "Father Frontin promised to bring you to see me. Dismount, Father. Your disobedient pupil — Oh, are you ill? Has he been hurt, cousin?"

For Frontin in the act of dismounting had collapsed on his horse's neck, and I sprang forward just in time to catch him as he slid, a limp weight, into my arms. One of the mounted servants took our horses, and the

other helped me to carry Frontin into the house, though I might have done it alone, so little and light he was. The great berlin rolled past us out of the gate, but Marie Adelaide never lifted her eyes from the pale unconscious face on my arm. I looked up to see the high-nosed, full-lipped profile of the angry aunt, as she sat bolt upright at the window. Poor old woman! Doubtless she felt that she was leaving a mad girl behind her — a girl who talked of devotion to a France without a king. To her and her kind the king was France.

At Marie Adelaide's direction we carried Frontin to her own room and laid him on her bed. A mounted groom fetched the surgeon from Clermont. The curé came scuttling through the rain — for the morning sunshine had been of short duration — the Host beneath his voluminous cloak. But Frontin never recovered consciousness, and his patient spirit slipped out of this world early that afternoon. Legardien's bullet, which had been meant for me and from which Frontin had saved me at the price of his own life, had pierced his abdomen, and the long hard ride through the late hours of the night had brought its deadly work to this swift termination. How he could have endured the long agony of that journey, the surgeon said he could not understand, and added that no ordinary man of twice his size and strength could have borne it.

Because at any moment the village might be overrun

by the retreating French army Marie Adelaide had his grave dug in a little group of yew trees at the bottom of the deep garden behind the château; and while we waited for the preparations for the simple funeral to be completed, she told me his story. The son of a well-to-do farmer near-by, he had so distinguished himself as a student for holy orders that a brilliant ecclesiastical career was open to him upon his ordination. He had chosen rather to be curé of an obscure little church in the Paris slums. Thence he had gone to serve for two years as chaplain with troops in the field in the last war and, returning, had asked for and received the parish of Vraincourt.

“When I used to chide him for hiding his light under a bushel,” Marie Adelaide smiled sadly, “he would laugh and say that there were plenty of good candidates for the bishoprics, that it was the country parishes needed good men — even men no better than he, he would add — as if there were any better!”

The little library, in which we were sitting, gave upon the garden, but there was only the gloom of the dismal autumn day to come through the single tall arched window. From outside the thud and crunch of the grave-diggers’ shovels sounded above the steady dripping of the eaves and the hiss of a few damp sticks upon the hearth. Their flickering light turned to warm ivory the girl’s vivid face and the bare forearms against

the black dress into which she had changed; and it burst upon me suddenly that she was very beautiful — so suddenly that the memory of her wealth, of my uncle's plans for us and his jeering references to the chance of my falling in love with her had no time to steel me against her beauty. At the thought that although we called each other cousin there was no barrier of blood-relationship between us, my heart, filled with sorrow and heavy with anxiety as it was, leaped up for joy.

She had paused but, when I sat dumb, she went on quickly, with a heightened color as if she guessed what had struck me silent. Frontin, she continued, had hailed joyfully the first movement toward reform in France, like so many of the parish clergy. He had sat with the Third Estate in the meeting of the States General three years before and had labored hard and well for the honest reorganization of the government and the national institutions. But when he stared down the steep path to revolution which soon opened to his clear sight, he was assailed by an outraged conscience. More and more, as matters went from bad to worse, as the intelligent and moderate began to be deserted by the extremists of one side and tricked or overwhelmed by those of the other, he blamed himself for the part he had taken. At last he resigned from his parish and found employment as my uncle's con-

fidential servant. My uncle knew nothing of him, except that he came with excellent recommendations. And in the discharge of those servile and often distasteful duties he found — as he had explained, when Marie Adelaide had remonstrated with him — a sense of expiation for his fault. It gave



him, moreover, a certain power for doing good, the opportunity, at least, to moderate and even to frustrate the evil which such a man as my uncle does, and does often — Frontin would have it — because he knows no better.

“He has always been far more my guardian than your uncle ever was, of course,” she explained with melancholy pride. “From the time when he prepared me for my first communion he took an interest in me. So, later, when I discovered that I knew all that my governess could teach me, I got him to carry me on in English and Italian and a little Latin. My own father couldn’t have been more foolish about me. He made himself think that I was clever and reasoned like a boy.”

She rose, as a low knock sounded on the door, and a servant announced that all was ready. I folded her

cloak around her and, when she stood with her head bowed on her clasped hands, silently weeping, I wept also — I should be ashamed if I had not — as I thought of the gallant soul that was gone and of the cool, unthinking way in which I had accepted the thousand small self-sacrifices by which he had smoothed as best he could the hardships of the past two weeks.

But such dreadful times as those through which we were living have this amelioration in their nature: blow falls on blow, one danger treads upon another's heels so swiftly, the struggle for mere life is so absorbing, that one has no time for vain regrets. Also we were young and, hardly knowing each other, found ourselves bound together by a hundred ties of grim necessity. And she was brave and helpless, beautiful and kind. So, as we faced each other by the light of the silver candlesticks on the supper table that evening, we discussed our plans with a kind of gay excitement.

I persuaded her easily enough that it was impossible for her to remain at the château, lying as it did in the track of both the armies. The alternative was not necessarily to take refuge with the enemies of her country. The question was — whither to go and how. Of her mother's people none was living save the aunt whose protection she had just discarded. My uncle, such as he was — and wounded and in hiding, besides — was the only person in France to whom she had the

right to turn. I took out my passport and sat frowning at it so long that, after speaking to me twice and getting no reply, she jumped up and ran around the table to look at it over my shoulder.

"Why, all it needs is the stamp of our mayor to take us both to Paris, or wherever we choose!" she exclaimed.

"It is only for me and my servant," I objected.

"But I make up admirably as a boy. You saw me this morning." Then, as I hesitated, unable to force myself to speak my thought, she walked back to her chair with grave dignity. "Pardon me, my cousin. I understand, of course, that my company would be an intolerable incumbrance on your journey."

I jumped up then.

"You are to understand nothing of the kind," I cried indignantly. "But — but — even in America —"

"My dear cousin, you aren't thinking of my reputation in straits like these?" she laughed. "Oh, you were, you were, you precious goose! But I like you even better for boggling over such a thing." And she laid her warm hand over mine in frank delight.

Doubtless it was a crazy plan we made after that. The first intelligent officer would probably have arrested us, for my papers bore no visa between Paris and Vraincourt and I did not know how Frontin had intended to get around that difficulty. But even now

I can think of no better one. It had at least the virtue of audacity. The American Legation at Paris was our objective. We would start as soon as we had made our simple preparations, riding her hunters through the night, if our strength held out so long, and finish the journey by post-chaise with all possible speed.

Marie Adelaide had risen to go to her room, and I was folding up my papers, preparatory to calling on the mayor, when she checked me with a lifted hand. The sound of loud knocking came through the closed windows.

"Open! Open in the name of the Nation!" a hoarse voice shouted.

But she met my glance of alarm with a scornful curl of the lips, as the bars clanged on the pavement of the courtyard and the gates creaked.

"They have already searched the house five times," she explained: "thrice pretending that I was hiding a priest who had refused to take the oath to the constitution, and twice on the pretext that I had arms concealed. Poor wretches! We had the upper hand so long, it's natural, I suppose, that they should like to show their power, now it's theirs. But they have never come in such numbers before," she added. For now the courtyard was resounding with a deep, voluminous mutter of voices, the clack of sabots and the scuff of boots; and a glare of torches lit the window-panes,

dimming the candle-light in the quiet room. From where I stood I could see scythe-blades lashed to poles for pikes, and the barrels of a half-dozen muskets and fowling-pieces.

"Don't look out," she cautioned. "It is best to act as if one regarded these affairs with supreme indifference." And, moving to her chair, she seated herself once more at the head of the table and looked up haughtily as the door was flung open by a frightened servant to admit the mayor, the local sergeant of police, and as many men and women as could crowd in from the packed corridor behind them. The mayor was a fat little man whose round cheeks glistened with the sweat of his internal struggle between duty and embarrassment at thus intruding on the representative of those who for centuries had personified authority for him and his fore-runners. He was desperately flustered, and his hand kept rising to his hat and jerking down again, as ingrained habit threatened to triumph over the consciousness of his new power.

"Mademoiselle de Renois," he began with breathless pomposity.

"Citizeness Renois, if you please, Citizen Mayor," she interrupted in low, clear tones. "Be mindful of the new form of address, I beg, even though you forget to remove your hat in a lady's dining-room. Have you come for arms again, or hunting another priest? You

will find neither. But do not let my assurances deter you from your duty."

"Citizeness Renois — Citizeness Renois, of course," the mayor began again, but now in such confusion between taking off his hat and replacing it on his head with a laughable attempt to recover his dignity that he could not proceed. A dried-up little creature in a worn leather apron, who crouched at his elbow with the curved blade of a shoe-maker's knife shining in his hand, spoke for him.

"It's you we've come for this time, Citizeness," he snarled. The mayor nudged him angrily for silence and rolled out the words of his office.

"Citizeness Renois, I place you under arrest, charged, first, with aiding the escape of the *émigrée*, your *ci-devant* aunt —"

"*Ma foi*, has the Assembly abolished the title of aunt along with the rest?" Marie Adelaide gibed lightly.

"Second, with harboring the non-juring priest Frontin, once curé of this parish. The sergeant of police will conduct you at once to the village jail, there to await the pleasure of Justice. Sergeant, conduct the prisoner."

The policeman made a step forward, but she lifted her hand in a gesture so confident in her expectation

of obedience that the habit of generations checked him in his stride.

"Does the niece control the movements of the aunt under your new dispensation?" she asked ironically.

"She left with your horses and carriage; therefore, evidently, with your consent," the mayor retorted.

"I loaned them to her, certainly, since she wished to go," Marie Adelaide admitted. "As to your second charge against me, Citizen Mayor, if to shelter under my roof, when he was dying, the priest who has given years of devotion to the service of this parish is to deserve punishment, then I will suffer cheerfully even detention in your filthy jail."

"The law concerns itself only with the fact that he had refused the oath to the constitution and that by sheltering him you became an accessory to his crime," the mayor replied after a gulp. "Sergeant, do your duty."

"But surely, Citizen Mayor," I interposed, careful not to raise my voice, though I was furious with indignation. "Surely the citizeness might be kept under guard here in her own house. A village lock-up is no place for a young girl, while here —"

"Here we should not be sure of her," jeered the shoemaker. "And it's high time girls like her should

learn what they have inflicted on their sisters of the people."

"What I inflicted on your daughter, when she stole my purse and I let her go unpunished, I suppose, Guerin," Marie Adelaide said lightly and reduced him to silence while the crowd in the corridor caught up the words and laughed.

"And who might you be, young man?" the mayor blustered at me. Marie Adelaide spoke before I could answer.

"An American traveler, a citizen of the Republic of the United States of America, who brought letters of introduction to me this morning. Permit me to present you, Citizen Mayor, to Citizen Mirecourt." She gave the name an English twist, as if it were made up of the words mire and court.

"You have papers proving your identity and your right to circulate in France, of course? Let me see them, Citizen," the mayor demanded suspiciously. And then I did what might have proved to be a foolish thing, had matters turned out differently from the way they did. My reason was clamoring that I must remain free, if I could, in order to contrive Marie Adelaide's rescue. But to stand there harmless and see her led away alone to a vile village lock-up foul with the occupancy of common thieves and drunkards was more than I could endure.

"Citizen Mayor," I said, "I believe I had best be frank with you. Although born in America, I am the son of a Frenchman. My name is Mirecourt. I brought the curé Frontin to this house, disguised as my servant. The *ci-devant* Marquis de Remberville is my uncle."

Unconsciously I had raised my voice so that it carried down the corridor, and such a yell of rage went up at my uncle's name that every other sound was lost in it.

"Take them both, sergeant," the mayor repeated, when he could make himself heard.

I had a brief, unreasoning spasm of fear lest our hands should be bound. But probably the mayor did not think such a precaution worth bothering about for so short a distance with the armed rabble all around us. He even had the decency, moreover, to send for our cloaks and hats, when I asked for them.

"You will be taken to the *mairie* first, to be searched," he informed me importantly.

The shoe-maker slunk to Marie Adelaide's side and leered up at her.

"My daughter searches the women prisoners — she and old Mother Brissot, who wasn't good enough to scrub your floors. Oh, but they will winnow you like a witch between them, my beauty!"

Marie Adelaide gave him the glance one gives to a yapping cur, smiled at me, and laid her hand lightly

on my arm. So, with the mayor in front and the sergeant with drawn sabre at our backs, we passed down a lane in the close-packed corridor and out into the courtyard. A yell greeted our appearance—or I should say, mine. The news of my identity had been passed from mouth to mouth before us. Fists were shaken in my face, knives brandished. Women screamed “Spy,” and “Traitor,” and the nearer ones spat. If ever a man had done ill by obeying an unselfish impulse, I seemed to be that man at that moment. Whether I should live to reach the *mairie* I doubted thoroughly, and in my rage at these senseless creatures I hardly cared. With my pistols and my considerable strength a half-dozen of them at least should pay their lives for my death. But that I should have brought death, and quite possibly worse than death, upon the young girl at my side—for if they fell upon me, it was not to be hoped that they would spare her in their blood-thirsty frenzy—was more than I could bear. As they swept us through the gate, I looked back over the stream of frantic faces red and yelling in the torch-light, and my hand went to the pistols hidden beneath my shirt. But Marie Adelaide checked me with a pressure on my arm.

“Not yet, Henri,” she whispered. “But when you must—before those women can—the first shot for me, if you love me, my dear.”



CHAPTER XIII

RESCUED

AT HER words such a glorious tide of strength poured through my members that I was ready to tear the sergeant's sabre from his hand and fall upon that cowardly throng alone. If I loved her! Then she must care for me, for never otherwise would she have spoken so. And all at once I had a strange sense of acquiescence in our fate. What further need of life had either of us now? And we could pass out of it swiftly, almost painlessly, and together: she with my bullet through her brain; I in a wild gay fight of one against a hundred, in which I should drop senseless at last under a storm of blows.

The mob, with us near its head, flooded through the gates, filling the narrow street from side to side, and blocked a chaise and four that drove up to the front wheels into it, so furious had been the vehicle's speed. In fact, the leaders' heads pushed the mayor back upon my toes. By the light of the swaying torches I caught the gleam of soldiers' uniforms under the postilions' cloaks. The badge of the army headquarters train flashed as the chaise door flew open to let an officer leap

to the ground, vociferous with demands to know why he was impeded in the discharge of his duty; and at the sound of his voice and accent hope leaped anew in my breast. There could be but one officer capable of rolling out such barbarous French with such evident satisfaction.

"Garth!" I cried. "It's Mirecourt." And in three swift English sentences I told my plight, the while he ruthlessly shouldered his way toward the place at my side where the tricolored scarf of the mayor proclaimed the presence of authority. "Garth!" I repeated, as he did not answer.

"Be silent, prisoner," he snapped, giving me a stony glance, and turned on the mayor a face of fury. "What is the meaning of this, Citizen Mayor? An officer from General Dumouriez with dispatches for the Minister of War stopped in your filthy village by a mob! I shall report this outrage. Prisoners? What do I care for your prisoners?" This in response to the mayor's continuous babble of excuses. "Spies? Persons accused of harboring enemies of the Nation? Come, then; you may not have done so ill to stop me, after all. My orders are to arrest any such whom I may encounter and convey them to Paris for examination with all speed.

"Here, you," he cried, whirling on me and drawing

a pistol from his sash. "Into the chaise with you, lively. The woman, too." His hand fell on Marie Adelaide's shoulder and he swung the muzzle of his pistol into the shoe-maker's face when that villain would have blocked the way.

"Clear out, you scum," he shouted, "or I'll quarter a battalion of the sweepings of Paris on your lousy hamlet. Open my way there, Sergeant of Police, in the name of the Nation." Driving us before him, he had reached the door of the chaise by this time. "In with you," he cried, prodding me in the back with his weapon. "Now, Citizeness."

He handed her in less unceremoniously and leaned in after her to whisper sharply in English:

"Draw your pistols, Mirecourt, if you've got 'em. We'll shoot our way out of here, if we must." He sprang upon the step. "Attention, postilions! You there, Sergeant of Police, clear my road in the name of the French Army! Mind your people, Citizen Mayor! *Allez! En avant!*"

We went, through a wild scurry of people too astonished to do more than spring for their lives from the charging horses and flying wheels. Only the venomous shoe-maker leaped, knife slashing, at the off-leader's throat. I fired as I would fire at a rabid dog, and the fore wheel of the chaise cut short the

cry with which he fell. Garth swung himself inside, pushing his pistol back into his sash, as we cleared the crowd.

"The dirty scoundrels!" he exclaimed. "They'll be tasting their own medicine by tomorrow night. Verdun surrendered this afternoon. They'll have Artois's *émigrés* making life hell for them in another twenty-four hours.

"And now tell me all about it," he went on. "After all, I am an officer of the French Army, you see. I haven't got into a hole by pulling you out of that mess, have I? You aren't doing Brunswick's dirty work. Of that I'm sure. But this lady, who is she?"

I made haste to present him with such proper form as the sway and lurch of the speeding chaise would permit.

"And if she weren't a loyal Frenchwoman, she would have been off with her aunt to Brunswick's headquarters this morning," I added. "But tell me. Do you really mean that you have no orders to pick up suspected spies—that you bluffed them back there?"

"What should an officer carrying dispatches have to do with spies?" he laughed. "I doubt if even your mayor believed me. But he didn't want a lynching in his village and grabbed the chance of shifting the responsibility for you two on to me."

"I never thought you had it in you to think as fast as that," I blurted, laughing, too, with the nervous mirth that comes so easily after a narrow escape from deadly peril.

"I've found out a lot of things in me in the last month, that even I didn't know were there," he replied soberly.

"The makings of a colonel, for one, I observe. My hearty congratulations, my dear fellow!" said I, for a colonel's insignia had glistened in the torch-light.

"Pooh!" he scoffed sincerely. "I was kicked upstairs, if you want the truth about it. My battalion mutinied, like a lot of others. I shot the two ring-leaders with my pistols, and Dumouriez made me a sort of supernumerary colonel on his staff to save me from getting a bullet in the back in the first skirmish."

In the darkness I sat and wondered at the change in him which had been wrought by three short weeks of campaigning with the raw levies of the Revolution. The note of blatant self-assurance had gone out of his voice altogether, now that he spoke quietly. His tone was one of humorous lightness, as much in accounting for his promotion as when he inquired about the circumstances in which he had found us. And when I awoke from what seemed but a few moments' dozing and found the interior of the chaise dusky with the light of another drizzling dawn, the alteration of his

appearance was equally striking. Lines of responsibility and disillusionment had graved away the old-time florid complacency; the unceasing stress of the life of a battalion commander in the field had condensed his portliness to essential muscle and sinew.

As I opened my eyes, our horses were being changed in the inn-yard at Epernay. He laid a hand on my knee, with a warning glance at Marie Adelaide, who occupied the opposite corner of the back seat. The hood of her cloak had slipped from her head, uncovering her rich brown hair and the lovely contours of her face flushed with deep slumber.

"Wonderful creatures, women, aren't they?" he whispered. "The confidence they place in us underserving wretches! When I think of what I —"

I stretched out my hand and grasped his, as he broke off.

"I haven't congratulated you on your marriage. I heard of it before I left Paris. I do now most sincerely."

"But not as much as you should. Nobody could do that. My word, Mirecourt, when I think of that little girl giving herself to me — after one week's acquaintance — Well, if I don't pay her a life-time's devotion for it — And imagine having to leave a girl like that on the morning after your wedding! For two cents I'd have let the cause of Human Freedom go to the devil. I believe I would anyhow — handed in my

papers, by George! — if I'd had any way but soldiering to earn a living for her."

His voice had risen with the intensity of his emotion and, as the chaise rolled forward behind four fresh horses, Marie Adelaide opened eyes wide with momentary bewilderment but brightening immediately in a smile of recognition.

"I don't remember that we thanked the colonel for his services last night," said she. Garth waved his thick hand with one of his old pompous gestures, though he had forgotten the tone that would once have gone with it.

"Mademoiselle," he protested. "Mademoiselle, I say — for they can never make a mere citizeness out of you — I only paid off an old debt. Hasn't your cousin told you how he and Frontin rescued me and the girl I married in Paris last month? I've never thanked you for that, Mirecourt, though I shall never forget it."

We pulled up for breakfast at the little inn at Damery just then; and immediately it appeared that it was well we had not alighted at a larger place. The rumor of the arrival of an officer with dispatches from the front, accompanied by a lady, soon brought a cluster of those particularly venomous war-time characters, the home-staying patriots, to stare and whisper about the door. But there happened to be nobody in that tiny hamlet with sufficient sense of his own im-

portance to question a colonel of the headquarters staff. So we drove away without misadventure.

But the mutterings and suspicious glances which accompanied our departure were enough to heighten the nervous gayety with which we saw the miles fly past. In the back of the mind of each of us, I suppose, lurked the dread of what awaited our arrival at Paris, of the strict examination of all who would pass the barriers. With my passport bearing not one single visa since I left the city, and Marie Adelaide without so much as a scrap of official paper to account for her, Garth's resourcefulness and effrontery alone could save us from detention there. Doubtless he had formed some plan, but I put off asking what it was, unwilling to damp our spirits by raising such a question before I had to. For in times of danger one quickly learns to seize the pleasures of the moment, cheered by the success of the last escape and encouraged to meet the perils of the future by the memory of those already passed in safety.

The conversation turned back to Garth's first meeting with the girl who had become his wife, and upon my remarking that it seemed strange that Legardien had rescued us both on that occasion and that Garth in turn had saved him from the muskets of the patrol, Garth asked:

"Have you seen Legardien since?"

In reply, since youth gives little confidence without giving all, I ended by telling the whole story of my adventures since that night. Perhaps, too, the chance to shine as a hero of some sort in the lovely eyes of Marie Adelaide had its part in breaking down a prudent reticence. For climax to my tale I drew from round my neck the broad silk handkerchief in which I had knotted the gem in Remberville church, and laid in her palm the red splendor of the last of the Prior's rubies. I thrilled to her cry of amazed delight.

It was indeed a wonderful thing to see on that dull day, how in the dim interior of the chaise the great stone glowed as with an inward fire of its own. Marie Adelaide gazed down upon it thoughtfully, her long lashes almost brushing the soft cheeks whose rich color seemed to reflect the radiance of the jewel. Garth stretched one finger toward it and drew back his hand as if he feared its touch.

"And you say there were seven like that?" he exclaimed. "And Legardien knew it? If he had seen them, I should say he must have been excused for half his villainy."

"You are convinced of his villainy at last, are you?" I asked.

He gave his lamentable imitation of the French shrug and laughed ruefully.

"Oh, I was fooled by him right enough. I admit

it. I caught him trying to make love to my Babette the day after I told him of our engagement." And at the sense of outrage in his tone I had much ado not to smile until his next words struck me grave.

"I sent him about his business, you can wager," he went on. "And the scoundrel went off, swearing he'd have vengeance on me. Can you imagine the impudence of him? Vengeance because I objected to his making up to my fiancée!"

"To me it sounds very much like him; and he'll have his vengeance, too, if you don't take care, unless I wounded him more seriously than I dare to hope," I replied. But I could not resist the temptation to tease Garth a little about his former estimate of Legardien, and added:

"All of which doesn't prevent his being a true patriot, of course, a sterling friend of the people."

"A paid agent of *Égalité Orléans*, as half the leaders of the scum of Paris are, I begin to believe," he snorted. "Good lord, Mirecourt, if I had guessed in New York at half I've picked up about this revolution between Paris and army headquarters, I'd be chasing Indians in the Ohio country by now. I wish I was — only then I'd never have met my little girl.

"That's a great country," he went on, as neither of us spoke. "I was out there last year in command of

Harmer's escort, bought land — the sweetest tract, along a smooth stream ten miles below Cincinnati. When this war is over, my wife and I are going there and live like a king and queen — plenty of game from our own woods, fish from our own waters, a few negroes to till the soil — ”

“ She is not afraid to go into that wilderness? She does not dread the solitudes, the savages and wild beasts, this little Paris wife of yours? ” Marie Adelaide, who had been listening with eyes that grew ever more intent, broke in.

“ She says she dreads nothing with me at her side,” Garth boasted like his old self. Then, as if the thought were new to him, he queried anxiously, “ You don't think that is impossible, do you, Mademoiselle Renois? I mean, she does not say that merely because she believes it a good wife's duty to fall in with her husband's wishes, does she? ”

“ If she loves you, she says it because she adores the thought of sharing dangers and hardship with you,” Marie Adelaide cried impulsively. “ Henri, are there wild beasts and savages in New York? ”

I told her that dangerous wild animals remained only in the backward counties of the state, and that what Indians remained seemed to be falling rapidly into a harmless state of degradation. But she hardly appeared

to listen to me and shrank back into her corner of the chaise in a silence that puzzled me more then than it does now.

We had rolled through Dormans meanwhile. At Château-Thierry Garth had a luncheon of cold fowl and bread and cheese and a couple of bottles of wine handed in, and we ate as we drove on. La Ferte, Meaux, Lagny, slipped past in the long afternoon. In the rainy twilight, as our brakes groaned on a long down-hill, I was startled by the sight of the same bend in the road where Frontin and I had slipped out of our chaise two weeks ago and the path by which the gallant little priest had led me on the first stage of this adventure. Great soul burning in that small body, thirsting for the quiet life of study and good works that he adored, with what humble cheerfulness had he borne his fantastic, self-imposed expiation for a course which most men—even most good men—would have excused in themselves as the result of mistaken generosity!

It was from sad thoughts that Garth's voice aroused me. Villages and the walls of suburban villas had begun to line the road. The ordeal of the barriers was almost upon us. So far the guards at bridges and *octrois* had done no more than snap to the salute, when Garth's military pass backed up the stencilled badge

upon the carriage doors. But there would be no such complaisance at the gates of Paris.

"Mademoiselle must figure as your wife," said he. "You two have made a runaway match of it because her father, a proud aristocrat, refused to allow his daughter to marry a plain American citizen. That will account for her not being mentioned in your passport. Your passport has no visas because you never stopped for a night anywhere between Paris and your irate father-in-law's château near Clermont. I picked you up—not from the hands of a mob, mind—but, finding you and your wife on the roadside with your chaise broken down, I took pity on you as a compatriot. Your servant, whom your passport calls for, remained with the chaise to bring on your luggage. That covers everything, I think, and will appeal to your revolutionist's insatiable taste for sentimental romance."

"All but the date on my passport," I objected. "That's over two weeks old now. What have I been doing ever since, if I drove through at such speed on my journey east?"

"Lurking at a farm near papa's estate, having clandestine meetings, bribing a priest to perform the ceremony, and waiting for a dark night. And you didn't register at Clermont lest papa should hear of your arrival."

"And my marriage certificate?" Marie Adelaide took him up. "Hélas, I put it in my dressing-case, which was left in the wreck of the chaise."

"Good!" Garth exclaimed. "I'm glad you thought of that little detail. Now! I'm the interrogating officer. I question you both."

This he was still doing, making sure that none of us should contradict another in our answers, when the chaise drew up before spiked gates that gleamed in the light of two huge iron lanterns flanking the door of the *octroi* guard-house. The rain had ceased; and the bayonets of a picket of National Guards glittered in the strong moonlight. Behind them bristled the pikes and hatchets of a small party of the rabble such as I had seen in possession of the streets on the day of the capture of the palace. But here again the prestige of the army, the sole bulwark between the capital and the foreign invader, carried us through. Vouched for by General Dumouriez's special messenger to the Minister of War, my account of myself and Marie Adelaide was accepted with hardly a question by the officer on duty, while my story of stealing an aristocrat's daughter was hailed with guffaws of delight by the unwashed ruffians, men and women alike, that crowded close around our vehicle.

They demanded a sight of the bride; and I adored Marie Adelaide afresh, as she leaned out of the win-

dow, fearless to all appearance, and blew a smiling kiss to this one and that. The men cheered and bade us drive on. The women, foul sluts and fouler hags, with probably more than one tigerish murder to their account — for though we did not know it, the dreadful massacres of September had begun the day before — crooned over her: *Qu'elle est mignonne!* Altogether it was an extraordinary exhibition of that sentimentality which is the actuating principle of all mobs, moving them to horrible cruelties, but only at the demand of what seems to them a poetic justice.

The officer seemed to be chiefly concerned to know whither I was taking my bride, so that he could account for us, if he should be required to do so.

"To the Legation of the United States of America," Garth assured him: he was dropping us there on his way to the Minister of War. So we clattered on through streets lighted, but emptied of people by terror of the dreadful things that were being done, unknown to us, at all the prisons where aristocrats and others suspected of royalist sympathies were incarcerated. When we pulled up again, it was beneath the red and white stripes and the starry circlet on the blue field that floated, night and day, above Mr. Morris's door — and continued to float there, alone of all the flags of foreign diplomats, through the terrible two years to come.

"My love to that dear little wife of yours," said Marie Adelaide, clasping Garth's hand in farewell. "I hope that some day I shall be able to tell her how much I owe to her husband. How happy you must be! You will see her tonight, will you not?"

"Unless the Minister of War keeps me talking until morning," he replied. "Happy? Happy? Ah, mademoiselle, there is no word in French or English for what I feel with her so close as this."

"After all that he has done for us I pray God nothing may mar their happiness," she said to me, as we mounted the door-step. She shivered, and added with a laugh. "What a silly thing to say! What should mar it, now that he is safe out of the field?"

"Yes," I said, and again "yes," to make sure that my voice sounded quite natural. For I had turned to follow the chaise with my eyes and, as it passed under the lamp at the corner, I had seen a figure drop from the boot behind and scuttle away into the shadows with the awkward swiftness of some unclean animal. It was a figure bent at the knees, and at the waist so distorted that the head was twisted almost at a right angle with the back in order that it might see where it was going. I had never seen such another misshapen wretch, except that one-eyed sailor with the great sore on his knee, whom my father had driven from our door and who had joined in the attack on us that same

night in the street. Could this be he, by chance among the rabble at the barrier, and now, with some more or less accurate notion of my errand in France, fastened upon my trail? Far more likely, I hastened to assure myself, it was merely some similar wretch who had seized the opportunity afforded by the chaise to ride in the direction in which he happened to wish to go. But the sight of him filled me with a sense of misgiving which even the cordial welcome of the minister did not entirely dispel.



CHAPTER XIV

A DREADFUL LETTER

I HAVE some bad news for you," said Mr. Morris, leading me into his study. We had told our story over a late supper; Marie Adelaide had gone up to bed in care of the comfortable wife of the minister's *maître d'hôtel*; and I, all impatience to seek out my uncle and settle with him the question of the division of the treasure, had already discarded my borrowed coat, shaken my hair free of the ribbon with which I had tied it at Vraincourt, and generally altered my appearance so that in my patched boots and leather breeches I could pass for one of the rabble, for whom alone the streets were free from danger.

For the carnival of massacre had not been confined to the prisons, it appeared. A system of denunciations had sprung into being, and armed bands ranged the city, arresting any, be they ever so humble, whom some private enemy chose to brand with the name of royalist. A brief journey to the nearest self-constituted tribunal and a swift and terrible death under the pikes of the mob was the almost invariable conclusion of these episodes. Where the presence of distinguished aristocrats

was suspected, houses were searched, cellars and attics ransacked, and the victim, as often as not, hacked to pieces without even the mockery of justice which was kept up at the prison doors.

"Sit down," said Mr. Morris, and added with a sternness that seemed to triumph over his customary urbanity in spite of him. "You have no need to hurry. Monsieur le Marquis de Remberville was discovered and murdered in his hiding-place early this morning by a party of these two-footed wild beasts. From what I have heard of his relations with your father and yourself I do not suppose that your sense of personal loss would be great in any event. But, such as it is, these papers will serve to mitigate it. They were brought to me, as all that seemed to him worth gathering up, by a reliable agent of mine whom I sent to examine your uncle's quarters as soon as I heard of the crime. It occurred to me that there might be papers of value to your father which had escaped the fury of the murderers. But the whole place had been sacked and looted. These stray sheets strewed the floor in a way that caused my man to think that your uncle had been amusing himself with them when the rabble broke in upon him."

The half-dozen sheets of letter paper which Mr. Morris placed in my hand with an inscrutable glance, at which I wondered, bore the imprint of naked feet, the mark of a boot-heel and, one of them, a sprinkle

of dried blood. Then with amazement I saw that my uncle appeared to have been drafting a letter to my father when death came upon him, and that he had evidently found some trouble in expressing himself. Each sheet was headed "My very dear Brother"; some contained only a few lines; some with interlineations and words crossed out ran to half a page. I selected the longest, which was also the most free from corrections, and read it through; and as I did so, my wonder changed to such horror as in all that I had passed through I had not felt before.

"It is with profound regret," it ran, "that I write you of your son. When he came to be tested — *hélas!* — the low strain in him prevailed, as perhaps we should have known that it must. The sight of the jewels — for he found them safe in their hiding-place, and they are now on their way to Amsterdam to be sold — proved too much for the true blood which he had from you. He turned like a mad man upon the two trusty servants whom I had sent with him. He had announced his intention of absconding to Germany with the treasure, it appears, and they demurred. Frontin, my own valet, he shot down in his tracks. Perrin, son of the game-keeper of your boyhood days, whom you may remember, only saved himself from a like fate by superior quickness with his own weapon. It is he who gives me this account of the affair. There were no

other witnesses, naturally. But, since he brought me the jewels, there can be no question of the truth of his narrative.

“I cannot adequately express my sympathy for you in this catastrophe of all your hopes as the father of a son. What strange sequence of events we set in motion by one headstrong act in youth! Needless to say, I will speedily provide against the impoverishment in which I gather that you are now living. Your son’s body, I regret to have to add — ”

There was no more, but I sat staring at the paper. But for the act of the rabble I should have been a dead man at that moment — shot, perhaps, or stabbed by my uncle as he sat, propped up among his pillows. Frontin, too, was evidently to have been a victim; and our bodies, stripped of all means of identification, would have been thrown into the street, where they would have been accounted for as victims of the mob. As for my father, with this devilish story of my end, lacking all means and power to test its truth — I closed my eyes, sick and dizzy at the abyss of treacherous hate that yawned between the meticulous tracery of those lines.

A loud knocking at the street door and Garth’s voice, urgently demanding to see me at once, brought me out of that nightmare reverie. Mr. Morris answered my look with a nod, and I hurried into the corridor to find

Garth in lively altercation with the servant who had opened the door. Garth it was, but how changed from the capable and self-confident staff-officer, the happy bridegroom, of a few hours before! My first thought was that he had been celebrating his return in the manner in which he had celebrated his resignation from the American army, his departure from New York and his arrival in France. His hat was gone, his stock awry, coat and waistcoat undone. His wild glance ranged the stairs, the closed doors on either side of the corridor, its shadowy corners, before it settled upon me. But his face was deathly pale and, thrusting the servant aside, he walked straight up to me and took me by the shoulders with his two thick hands.

"Mirecourt, do you know what they've done?" he began in a low, swift mumble. "They've killed her. Those devils have killed my wife. The neighbors told me. This morning down at La Force prison they butchered her and her aunt with their pikes. That's what Legardien meant. This is his vengeance that he threatened me with. He wrote a letter, they say, denouncing them for sheltering royalists. They never did. But he mentioned that night when we all ran into their work-room to get away from the mob and he claimed that they took in royalists then. Do you know where Legardien is, Mirecourt? That's what I came for. I've got to find that fiend — find him quick be-

fore somebody else kills him or he dies of the wounds you gave him. Haven't you any idea where he might be?"

Mr. Morris had come into the hall while he was speaking, and I strove to divert the poor fellow for a moment by presenting him to the minister. But at once he was off again with, "Your Excellency, do you know what they've done?" ending pathetically, "Do *you* know where I might find that fiend, your Excellency?"

"Not at the moment, Colonel Garth," Mr. Morris replied in a quiet tone; and it was pitiful to see poor Garth strive for control over himself in answer to this evocation of his official rank. "But if you will come in here and sit down, we will discuss over a glass of my sherry the best way to go about finding him."

"Now let me have the whole story of Legardien's movements," he went on, when he returned with three full glasses from the spirit-stand in one corner of the room. "No. Let Mirecourt tell what he knows, first, while you sit quietly and sip your wine."

I began with what we had learned of Legardien in New York, but I stopped in astonishment before I had got through my account of Counselor Mygatt's taking up his defense. Garth had fallen into a profound slumber. Mr. Morris smiled with satisfaction as he followed my glance.

"Complete nervous exhaustion — and I mixed the

stiffest sleeping draft I dared with his wine," he explained. "By the way, I've a letter here for you from your father. It came yesterday, but it slipped my mind until this moment. Before you read it, however, I wish you would tell me something, if you will. You mentioned old Mygatt a few minutes ago. I remember the old curmudgeon well, and I am wondering why he is anxious for information about you."

"About me?"

"Yes. He writes, desiring me to obtain all possible information about your whereabouts and your movements since you arrived in France, and to forward it to him in care of our consul at Le Havre."

"At Le Havre?" I exclaimed. "The old rascal isn't coming to France?"

"Evidently. He urges me to reply at once, so that the letter may find him the moment he arrives there."

"Perhaps my father's letter will tell us something about it," said I and, opening it, skipped from paragraph to paragraph until my eye caught Mygatt's name.

"I think the old man must be mad," wrote my father, after telling how the counselor had come to call upon him at his lodgings. "At first I couldn't make out what he was driving at, for it sounded like nothing more nor less than a veiled attempt at blackmail, which I couldn't believe, coming from such a wise old buzzard as he has always been. So I replied with any vague

generalities I could think of until, if you please, he flew out at me in a rage. He was not to be played with, as I should find to my cost. He knew what he knew, and when he laid his information before the French government, you and I should find to our cost what it meant to cross him. I told him I didn't know what he was talking about and bowed him out. And even yet I am in the dark. But I hear that he has actually taken passage for France on a vessel sailing in about ten days. So I think it well to put you on your guard, though what he has in mind to do against you, and how he could hope to recoup his losses at our expense, is more than I can fathom.

“He is evidently desperate, however. I suspect that he has invested heavily in the French funds, reasoning that the further the revolution went, the surer were the new issues to become valuable. In fact, of course, their price has fallen lower and lower — not only in London, but on every exchange in the world — with each new bit of news that comes out of France. Whether he has misused funds he held in trust or not, he may well see ruin staring him in the face — ruin of reputation as well as fortune. For none would ever employ him again, should his dabbling in such a speculation become known. Be watchful, therefore. It is quite possible that he wrung from Legardien some knowledge of your purpose in going to France; and while I cannot

see what connection that might have with his threat of denouncing us to the French government, I remind myself that no enemy is so venomous as a weak one."

"Well, after all," said Mr. Morris, as I ceased to read, "this only amounts to another reason for getting you out of France at the earliest possible moment. And that, since you are an American citizen, should be quite easy."

"And my cousin?" I asked.

"Your cousin? Ah, to be sure! See what it is to be a confirmed bachelor. I had actually forgotten the lovely creature. However" — he rose and handed me one of the candles burning on his desk — "the French have an excellent proverb, which doubtless you know — *la nuit porte le conseil*. I suggest that we try it. For I cannot make out when you have rested, and I have put in a tremendous thirty-six hours. The number of my noble friends who have made this house a temporary refuge since yesterday would astonish you, and a list of those sleeping in my attic at this moment would read like an account of a grand levée at Versailles in an old court-register."

His face was sharp with anxiety and gray with fatigue, but he gave a dry chuckle as he spoke.

"I'll have one of my men keep watch over our poor

friend here," he added with a glance at Garth, who still slept soundly in his great armchair.

BUT when we met again in the study next morning, the night appeared to have done little for us in the way of counsel. Marie Adelaide, who joined us at Mr. Morris's request, looked as fresh and charming as when I had seen her first on the threshold of her own château two mornings before. The minister's valet had done what he could for me with shears and razor and borrowed garments. And Mr. Morris himself maintained his air of grave urbanity without the effort of last night. But, rested though we were, we seemed to be no nearer to the solution of the problem presented by Marie Adelaide. She could not leave Paris except in some disguise which would expose her to a hundred unpredictable dangers — for, difficult as it was to enter the city, the examination of those desiring to leave was twice as strict. And if she should remain with any of the few who might receive her for the sake of old-time friendship with her parents, she would share only the precarious existence which was theirs.

"Of course," said Mr. Morris, when one plan after another had been suggested and given up because of some incontrovertible objection. "Of course," he repeated, shooting a sly glance from Marie Adelaide to

me, "if you had come to me with a charming young French girl whom you had married, I could have made a simple indorsement on your passport, attached a transcript from the marriage register, and defied the greatest *sans-culotte* of them all to interfere with you, because by the law of nations a wife assumes the nationality of her husband."

He paused again, and under his smiling glance I suspect that we both reddened a little, as he proceeded to elaborate his theme.

"By such an arrangement, moreover, the girl's property would be safe from seizure. Whereas, if she left the country as a Frenchwoman, she would be branded as an *émigrée* and her estates forfeited to the nation."

"And I—no French girl could endure to come to her husband empty-handed," Marie Adelaide exclaimed impulsively, her cheeks flaming at the slip by which her tongue had betrayed her.

"Pooh," I retorted out of my embarrassment. "No American wants property with his wife, and especially when he knows that marrying him is her only means of escape from constant danger."

"You believe that?" Marie Adelaide asked, her tone very quiet but her brown eyes aglow with indignation. "You can believe such a thing after—you can believe that a girl would marry for such a reason?" she ended lamely.

"Since you think an American husband must have a dowry with his bride," I answered, all my old repugnance to my uncle's suggestion about us awakening to sting me.

"Oh, come now," Mr. Morris chided lightly. "This has the makings of a very pretty quarrel, I admit. But the question is purely academic, is it not? Neither of you is of age, I think, for one thing."

"Then we couldn't be married, anyway?" I asked, startled out of my foolishness, as I have no doubt he meant me to be.

"Henri!" cried Marie Adelaide, springing to her feet. "Who wishes us to be married? Who ever spoke of such a thing?"

"I wish it, for one," I said hardily.

"Nevertheless you could not be married in France," Mr. Morris intervened before either of us could say anything more. "Without the consent of parents or legal guardians it would be impossible under the French law. But by a convention of international law this house stands on the soil of the United States, and although such a thing would be unusual, still, in times like these —" He glanced at his watch. "Pray pardon me, my children," he exclaimed, "but it is time for my appointment with the doctor whom I called to see poor Garth. I shall be with you again presently."

Marie Adelaide had walked to the window and stood,

looking out into the shrubbery of the little high-walled garden behind the house. I went to her and laid my hand gently on her shoulder.

"Forgive me, my dear cousin," I said. "If I spoke foolishly, I ask your pardon."

"I am not your cousin," she replied quietly. "Unfortunately we happen to have had the same uncle: that is all. You are under no more responsibility for me or my safety than any gentleman would be for a lady whom he has known for only two days — and that you have amply discharged. I thank you, monsieur. But the thought that you feel me still a burden upon you desolates me."

"Marie Adelaide," I exclaimed, "you don't mean that — you cannot mean it — after what we have been through together — that night — only night before last, my dear — with the mob all around us, when you asked me, if I loved you, to —"

"You remember that?" she asked in a tone of polite astonishment, but she kept her face turned from me. "How odd to remember a thing like that of a girl who would marry just anybody to save herself from danger!"

"My dear," I cried, "I never said such a thing!"

"You said that no American would ever willingly marry a girl who wasn't penniless, at least."

"Look here," said I, and capturing both her hands,

I turned her about so that she faced me with wet lashes and a trembling mouth. "Never mind what either of us has said this morning. Let us stick to what we both know." Then, as it suddenly seemed to me that a gentle invisible presence stood beside us, I added, "How Father Frontin would smile at two such precious idiots!"

When Mr. Morris returned five minutes later, I thought he showed a remarkable lack of surprise at the readiness with which we accepted his suggestions for our future. Even now I think he showed an extraordinary knowledge of young human nature for a bachelor of his years.



CHAPTER XV

AT THE SIGN OF THE LUCKY FISHERMAN

I SHALL always think gratefully of the good people who kept the *Inn of the Lucky Fisherman*, which stood on the outskirts of Le Havre, not far from the beach, in the year 1792. They were very kind to the young Americans who stayed with them for a week in the middle of that September, and I hope that the money I sent them afterwards fully made up for the trouble and damage which we brought upon them without intending it before our departure.

For it was to Le Havre that Mr. Morris sent us, in spite of old Counselor Mygatt's intention to land there. La Motte, the consular agent of the United States at Le Havre had not his equal in France for the transmission of secret correspondence and the handling of confidential matters generally. Passage to England would be more easily obtained for us there than at the northern Channel ports, which were being more closely watched. And London afforded the best market for my great ruby, next to Amsterdam, which I could have reached only by a dangerous journey across the war zone or by a voyage for which ships were rare. As

for the risk of encountering Mygatt, Mr. Morris thought that it was slight, provided I kept a watchful eye on vessels arriving from America; and he refrained from answering Mygatt's letter in the hope that the lawyer would post directly for Paris when he found no news of me awaiting him.

Our journey from Paris was entirely uneventful. The fact that Marie Adelaide spoke fluent English did more than anything else to divert suspicion from us. For, while her accent would have advertised her French origin in England or America, it passed unnoticed among people who knew nothing of the language. Good luck and that desire to be of service to a couple of young people just beginning their life together, which almost everybody feels, did the rest.

No sooner had we partaken of the simple wedding-breakfast which followed our marriage by a stranded Church of England clergyman in the Legation drawing-room than Mr. Morris himself conveyed us in his own carriage beyond the barriers on the Route de la Normandie. A mile beyond we changed to the post-chaise which had followed us from the city, and bade farewell to our indefatigable protector. Both of us wondered, I think, at the look in his fine eyes, as he pressed our hands, and at the earnestness with which he wished us happiness and safety.

It is not in healthy youth to see the pathos in itself,

but years after I was able to imagine how we must have looked to the eyes of that experienced, disillusioned man of the world, as we stood up together, so young and homeless and without any of our own blood beside us, and plighted our troth, with only himself and his servants and three or four chance refugees of the nobility, whom he was hiding from the mob, to wish us well. The old Comtesse de Saint Pol du Var, who had known Marie Adelaide's grandmother when they were at the same convent school, wept aloud. The old lady had been hunted over her own garden-wall, half-clad and with a few jewels knotted in a handkerchief, but she snapped a diamond bracelet on Marie Adelaide's wrist with such tremulous delight that it would have been brutal to refuse it. Garth insisted on standing up with me although, so far as delicacy would permit, I demurred to his subjecting himself to such an ordeal.

"I should really like to do it for you, Mirecourt," he said. "And it will cause me no pain. The truth is, I don't believe I shall ever feel anything again — unless, perhaps, when I get my fingers on the throat of that hound Legardien."

He had welcomed an opportunity to leave the French service. Charges had been preferred against him by certain impractical Jacobins in the army for the way in which he had quelled his mutinous bat-

talion, and the Minister of War was glad to get out of the complication of trying a zealous officer by permitting him to send in his papers at the American Minister's request. To expedite his departure from the country he was ordered to Le Havre, pending action on his resignation. He had promised Mr. Morris that he would leave France on the same vessel that carried us. But I have always believed that he had secretly resolved to return and have his revenge on Legardien at last, if fate had not arranged things otherwise.

He followed us to the port by the interval of half a day and put up at a different hotel from ours with a consideration for our feelings which I had not expected of him. There we still tried to keep an eye on him, although at the American vice-consul's suggestion we moved out to the *Inn of the Lucky Fisherman* when it appeared that we should have to wait several days for our ship. In that remote location, as La Motte pointed out, we were safe from those sporadic disorders which disgraced every city in France that wild September and we ran little risk of a chance encounter with Mygatt, if he should arrive before we got away. The only disadvantage of this arrangement was that it left poor Garth idle and without distractions to cope with his abiding sorrow alone. He refused our invitation to join us, and when he came to lunch or dine with us, as he frequently did, the smell of brandy which he brought

with him increased the fear, which I had entertained from the first, that he was turning to drink in his sadness as I had more than once seen him do in joy.

Marie Adelaide, inland bred as she was, delighted in those days by the sea. The weather was unusually fine for the time of year; a short, high-walled lane ran straight down from the little garden of the inn to a little beach of shingle; and there we lay long hours in the sunshine, watching the oily waves shoulder in from the hazy distance of mid-channel; and soothed by their soft crash and rattling withdrawal, the thought of our cares and the dangers that might still beset us sank in a drowsy sense of well-being.

It seemed indeed that our troubles must be over. Our vessel, an American ship bound for London, was rapidly loading; in my pocket were letters from Mr. Morris to his brother, who had taken the Tory side in our Revolution and was now a major-general in the British army, and to our minister at the Court of St. James's; and the great ruby, knotted in a broad silk scarf that went over my right shoulder, hung under my left arm, beneath my shirt. To be sure, I still carried my pistols and renewed the charges morning and night as a precaution against the seaside damp. I strove to remind myself that for all I knew Legardien was still alive and perhaps already hot upon our trail. I recalled to mind that misshapen wretch whom I had seen drop

from the boot of Garth's chaise on the night when he left us at Mr. Morris's door. But the warm salt-drenched air, the sense of the security of England lying just beyond the blue mists of the Channel, and Marie Adelaide's presence at my side were too strong for my fears. I went in and out and never gave Legardien a thought. As for Mygatt, I had left him out of account altogether by the time the captain of our vessel sent us word that he would sail on the first of the ebb-tide early that evening.

Our small luggage was sent on board, and we strolled once more down the pleasant, high-walled lane to loiter a last hour or two along the beach that would always be a happy memory to us both. The sun was down, the little garden full of dusky shadows against the lighted windows of the inn, when we returned to eat supper before driving to the port, where a ship's boat would be awaiting us. I opened the door for Marie Adelaide and found myself face to face with Counselor Mygatt.

"Mr. de Mirecourt!" he smirked, bowing repeatedly. "I began to wonder if I were not to have the pleasure, though Garth assured me I should find you here. But *in vino veritas* still holds good, I see, as it did among the ancients."

"Garth!" I exclaimed in consternation.

"Yes. And *in vino*, as I say. Oh, very much *in*



vino. Indeed, had it not been for me, I fear he would have forgotten to embark altogether. As it was, he fell between the landing-stage and the ship's boat and had to be fished out of the harbor with a boat-hook. Then I hurried here at once, though these fiacre-drivers are such brigands that I am doubly glad his information proved to be reliable.

“And I gather that he was equally accurate about all the good fortune which has attended you. *Mes felicita-*

tions, as they say over here," he added with a low bow and a leer for Marie Adelaide, as I did not speak. "Success, he tells me, has attended your every effort — or at least a sufficient measure of it. You will spare me a few moments in which to talk business, however, I trust."

"A very few," I answered grimly. While he talked I had been doing some rapid thinking, though to no very good purpose. I must get the old wretch to myself. But what I was to do with him then I didn't know. Evidently he was possessed of all the information about me that he needed. In my mind's eye I saw the unhappy Garth, completely besotted at last, pouring out to him the whole story of my adventures across the sloppy top of some café table. I turned to Marie Adelaide.

"Will you go in and begin your supper?" I asked, opening the door of the little parlor where our meals were served. "This gentleman shall not detain me long. And you, sir, have the goodness to follow me, if you please."

I led the way into a small room at the back of the bar, which was used only by a few customers of the better sort, farmers and substantial peasants, as an occasional rendezvous. Fortunately — or it seemed to me fortunate at the moment — the place was empty. A little iron lamp on the wall shed its light over the two tables

and the half-dozen chairs, black and polished with a century of use and waxing. I indicated a seat and took one opposite to him. The memory of our first encounter and of how I had beaten him for three shillings came to me. Now with a fortune at stake, and perhaps Marie Adelaide's and my own liberty as well, it would be strange if he had the best of me, I thought.

"You must pardon me, if I beg you to be brief, sir," I said. "My supper waits, and my vessel sails within an hour of the time at which I can reach the port."

"What I have to say will not take long," he replied, "but first let me call your attention to this."

I thought he was reaching into his pocket for some sort of memorandum. I don't know why, unless it was because I could think of no other reason for such a movement in a man like him. I believe my mouth must have fallen open in astonishment when I found myself looking into the muzzle of a short, heavy pistol. It wavered over me, as the wretched old man's arm twitched with nervousness, but above it his eyes met mine with a glare of such determined desperation that I kept down the impulse to risk striking it from his grasp.

"Hand over," he croaked, and stopped, his gray tongue busy along his dry lips, until he had sucked in a breath. "Hand over the ruby, and you shall be free

that moment to eat your supper and board your ship without molestation from me."

The proposal was so preposterous, as well from the point of view of his interest as from mine, that my sigh of relief must have been audible. For supposing I obeyed him and he let me go, I had only to denounce him to the people of the inn to take the ruby from him. Clearly the man's troubles had driven him mad, I thought, and perhaps I was not altogether wrong.

"To what end?" I asked quietly.

"To the end that I take it to Amsterdam and sell it there," he answered huskily. "Oh, I mean to deal fairly by you. You shall share in the proceeds. The day I receive the money half of it shall be placed to your father's credit with the Dutch agents of the Barings of London."

"And if I refuse — I don't say I do — but supposing I should, what then?"

"You dare not refuse."

"You would kill me?"

"And stick my head under the guillotine?" He gave a laugh that sounded as if it stuck in his throat. "Hardly! Refuse, and I march you to the nearest police station as a thief. Don't pretend to laugh at the charge. You know they would hold you. That ruby belongs to the French nation. Buried beneath the floor of Rem-

berville church, it became the property of the nation when all church property was seized by the nation by vote and order of the Assembly. Refuse to hand it over, and you go to the galleys for life."

So this was what he had meant by his threat to my father! And one moment of thought told me that he did not threaten more than he could perform. There was no court in France, as France was now, but would give its judgment against the nephew of the *ci-devant* Marquis de Remberville in any cause, let alone such a cause as this would be. Charged as a thief, moreover, and one who had stolen from the nation, even Mr. Morris could do nothing to save me. But if none of this had been so, I could not have subjected Marie Adelaide to the consequences of the investigation which my arrest would have brought upon all who had any connection with me. My one chance now lay in prolonging this interview until some chance interruption, the entrance of a customer or a servant to bid me come to supper, should reveal my predicament. But with his next words the lawyer deprived me of even this hope.

"I promised to take little of your time, Mr. de Mirecourt," he said smoothly, when I had remained silent for some moments. "I might have added that I could give you little of mine. The Citizen Aristide Legardien arrived at Le Havre late this afternoon. He asked me

if I could give him any news of you. Naturally, I said that I could not, but I don't suppose he will be long in tracing you through the bureau of police. Need I add that with his right arm and shoulder a mass of bandages he is burning with the desire to meet you? A certain misshapen, one-eyed sailor supplies his present physical deficiencies."

I made a movement of surrender. There was nothing else to do. With Legardien in Le Havre no sacrifice was too great to enable Marie Adelaide and me to gain our ship, and not a moment must be lost.

"I accept your terms, sir," I said and, with his permission, drew the handkerchief from over my shoulder, unknotted it, and let the jewel roll upon the table between us. I watched him narrowly the while. Let his eyes waver for but an instant to that glowing stone, and I would tear his pistol from his hand. But they did not, though what they might have done I cannot tell. A short, sharp scream rang through the house. Both of us sprang to our feet, our eyes upon the door, through which the sound had come. Then I had snatched his weapon and hurled him into a corner of the room with a blow of my fist on his chest. I caught up the ruby as I turned. Another leap would have carried me to the door, when it swung open and Legardien smiled bleakly at me out of his slant eyes from the threshold. Crouching in front of him, the misshapen sailor-man

held me covered by the muzzles of a pair of dueling pistols.

Why I did not fire from Mygatt's pistol and chance the outcome in such desperate straits I do not know. Surely some good spirit must have stayed my hand. For every door was held, every person in the house under guard of the party of villains Legardien had brought with him.

"You may place your weapon on the table, Monsieur le Comte de Parois," he said with ironical courtesy. "Now oblige me by stationing yourself just there, behind it. Ah, the Counselor Mygatt, I observe," he went on, advancing to the table and seating himself with a show of ease, as the lawyer scrambled to his feet and began mechanically to brush at his knees and elbows. "You lied to me then, Citizen Counselor? A regrettable thing, but not so unusual in a lawyer as to be worth dwelling upon at this moment. You will remain standing where you are. I will deal with your bad faith later on. Now, Tavernier — as I instructed you." He picked up the lawyer's pistol from the table, where I had laid it, and pointed it rather awkwardly with his left hand first at Mygatt, who froze under its muzzle, and then at me, adding, "I shoot badly with the left hand, but I do not miss at distances like these."

Meanwhile the crippled sailor had placed a chair be-

hind me and scrambled on to it. His hands fell upon my coat collar, and before I could guess his purpose he had thrown a small tough cord around my neck and drawn it till it cut into my skin.

"Steady, Monsieur le Comte," Legardien cried sharply, as I started. "You have the choice of deaths, I admit. But let me recommend the cord in preference to the bullet. The latter is a painful business, if one shoots no better than you did in Remberville church or than I am likely to do just now. I have a weakness for blowing off the lower jaw, moreover, when I am roused by the sight of blood. You may remember my telling you of it on a certain occasion. The death that ensues is the reverse of speedy and by no means painless."

"But after all you will not have the ruby," I taunted. I cannot say that I spoke with anything but the desire to put off the dreadful moment. I saw no chance that anything could save us, for his whole manner showed that he feared no interruption from the other occupants of the house. He laughed lightly and waved his hand.

"You still have the ruby, Monsieur le Comte, and it will be simpler to search you for it after — after — " He put his hand to the back of his neck and gave a curious twist and jerk. "Eh? You understand? Mr. Morris is the only person to whom you would have confided the stone, and you did not because he could send

it out of France no more safely than you could carry it yourself. But, stay! The girl may have it. I had forgotten that. Tavernier, have one of those fellows bring the girl in and search her here before me."

"Stop!" I cried, as the sailor leaped from the chair and scuttled to the door on his crooked legs. "I have the ruby here in my pocket. Shall I hand it over to you?"

"As I told you, we shall find it later, my dear Count." Legardien made an admonitory gesture with the pistol. "Tavernier, since you are there, oblige me by bolting that door. I would not be disturbed just now at any cost. As for the girl, my dear Count, I beg that you will not be concerned about her. I yield to none in my appreciation of beauty, as she shall discover almost before your body is cold. But now, Tavernier, on to your chair again, for much as I regret to terminate this charming interview — What was that?" he cried sharply, starting up.

A hoarse, muffled shout and the thud of many feet half drowned his question. With every muscle tense — for never had I meant to perish by that cord without a fight — I hurled myself backward, carrying the foul cripple with me in a maelstrom of arms and legs and bits of broken chair. The blast of the pistol in Legardien's hand scorched my cheek; the room roared with the detonation of the shot. The door fell, splin-

tered from its hinges; and Jefferson Garth, sabre in hand, his face bloodless, eyes aflame, leaped across it. He moved with the swift certainty of fate. The cripple, scrambling to his feet, dropped under a blow that cleft his head from brow to chin. Mygatt, who had leaped for the door, staggered back with a slash across his face. Legardien backed slowly toward the wall, the red point of the sabre at his heart, till he could back no farther. Holding him thus pinned, Garth spoke to me.

"Mademoiselle — Madame Mirecourt is quite safe. A ship's boat is waiting for us at the end of the lane, and the crew hold this house and such of this murderer's gang as did not bolt when we jumped them. As soon as I have finished what I have to do with Citizen Aristide Legardien here —" He broke off, and only later did I learn how, sobered by that plunge in the cold water of the harbor, the memory of his drunken babbling to Mygatt had returned to him, how he had guessed that the lawyer would make mischief for us if he could, and how he had begged of the Yankee skipper of our vessel a boat and an armed crew to fetch us off in case of need. Now he addressed Legardien:

"It would be an insult to the clean steel to finish you with my sword, Legardien. Also, I have promised myself the satisfaction of choking the life out of you with my bare hands."

He dropped the hilt, letting the weapon swing by the

sword-knot, and with a swift clutch of his thick hands caught his enemy by the throat.

"It will not be a quick death, Legardien," he panted. "It shall be as slow as I can make it, for I want to be able to remember it. Every time I think of that little girl of mine I want to be able to remember your face as it will look in the next minute, two minutes, five minutes, Legardien, if I can make you last that long."

"Garth," I cried in horror, "don't! All your life you will be sorry. Here's my pistol. Make a clean job of it. Don't soil your hands."

But he gave me only a shake of his head, which was now sunk between the swelling muscles of his shoulders, as I strove to thrust my weapon upon him. Legardien's eyes glared into his beneath those slanting brows; his breath whistled between clenched teeth. Then his left hand, which had been hanging inert at his side, leaped up and under Garth's straining arms. A steel blade flashed in the lamp-light. I fired across Garth's hands, full into that writhing insect face—but an instant too late. They fell to the floor together, Legardien with my bullet through his brain, the slim knife buried to the hilt in the heart of Garth.

FOUR seamen carried Garth's body to the boat on a litter improvised out of the oars. Our vessel made sail the moment we were aboard. The three rascals, remnant

of Legardien's gang, who had been captured when Garth's party rushed the inn, had been started for the town with enough hearty American kicks to clear their minds of all desire to interfere with our embarkation. But as we descended the high-walled lane to the beach, I was aware of Mygatt, a furtive shadow that crept behind us, nursing his slashed face in a strip of table-cloth. What became of him, what sort of life he managed to make for his old age in a strange land rife with war and revolution I never knew. The revelation of his dishonesty, which occurred soon after his departure from New York, made it as impossible for him to appeal to his country's diplomatic representative as to return, and he left behind him none to whom he dared to write.

At dawn next day Marie Adelaide and I stood together on the deck, while the body of poor, gallant, blundering, generous Garth slipped beneath the waves from a grating covered with the flag which he had hoped should wave above him and his little bride on the banks of the Ohio. The clear light of day was all around us when this sad task was done. A steady southwest breeze had carried us up the Channel through the night, and the cliffs of England shone but a few miles away on our port bow. Above them the crests of the downs flamed suddenly with the first beams of the sunrise. Marie Adelaide slipped her hand beneath my arm and drew me gently to the rail.

"Look, Henri — England!" she whispered thrillingly.

"Yes," I said. But I was heavy with sadness for poor Garth and with that sense of disillusionment which comes at the completion of every long and arduous task, and did not answer to her mood.

"That sunshine!" she went on, looking up into my face. "I don't know why, but it makes me think of your father, of what your success will mean to him and, most of all, his pride and joy in the man his son has shown himself to be."

A sound, healthy shame rushed over me at that. Here was she, friendless, a refugee, bound for a strange land, with only a boy whom she hardly knew to fend for her, and her thoughts were of my father and me, while mine were lost in unmanly moping!

"You have forgotten what will make him happiest of all," I said.

"And what is that?" she asked eagerly.

"The daughter whom he will adore," I answered. And I proceeded to do what I could to prove it, for the helmsman and the officer of the watch both had their backs to us.





Henry
Pitz

